

"A Penny a Story"

N.S.E.

The Black Cat

FOR JULY

10
CENTS



*In this number
- "Clothes Don't Make The Man" -
we think is the funniest
story we ever published
what do you think?*

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The Black Cat

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JULY, 1914

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The Black Cat

Clothes Don't Make the Man

(A story without a moral)

BY M. B. PHIPPS



HERE are but few men, who, after the trying ordeal of a hot, dusty, all night journey in the stuffy confines of a day coach, are able to preserve a dignified bearing. The Honorable John Heston was one of the exceptions; and now, as he dismissed the bell boy with the Canadian dime which he had saved for such an occasion, his features did not relax from their expression of stern, unyielding determination.

As the bell boy closed the door with an expressive bang, Mr. Heston seated himself and extracted from an inside pocket a crumpled sheet of yellow paper. He knew the wording of that telegram by heart, but he carefully perused it once more. It ran as follows:

Don't believe all the rot in the papers. I was not drunk. The man we hit deliberately jumped in front of us. It wasn't our fault—anyhow; he isn't much hurt. It is just a shyster hold up. It's an awful mess though, and if you will come on and straighten things out I'll be eternally grateful. Mr. Cohen of Black, Cohen, McCarthy and Knight, in the Century Building, is my attorney. Do come to the rescue, Dad, just this once more. I am going to cut it all out in the future.

Jack.

The cheerful disregard for expense, (it had not been sent as a night message,) was not lost upon Mr. Heston, for the telegram had been marked "collect." The hard line about his mouth tightened as he crossed to the telephone and proceeded to look up the

number of Messrs. Black, Cohen, McCarthy and Knight.

"This is Mr. John Heston speaking," he announced. "I am given to understand that my son, Mr. John Heston, Jr., has retained you as counsel."

Mr. Cohen, at the other end of the wire, suavely replied that Mr. Heston, Sr., had not been deceived.

"Then," Mr. Heston, Sr., continued, "I want you distinctly to understand that you must look to your client for your fee. He is of age, and I refuse absolutely to have anything to do with him. I left home immediately upon the receipt of his telegram, prepared once more to come to his assistance, but after reading on the train the newspaper accounts of the disgraceful affair, I have decided to wash my hands of the whole matter, and nothing which you or my son may say can alter my determination. Good bye."

And before the first words of protest from Mr. Cohen could reach his ears, Mr. Heston had hung up the receiver. Thus passing upon the predicament of his only son, who, for aught he knew, was still languishing in jail, Mr. Heston turned his attention to his own affairs. A bath and sleep, he decided, would not be amiss, especially as the first train back did not leave the city for several hours.

And right here is where Fate took a hand in the affairs of the Heston family; or, possibly, Fate had already

intervened when Mr. Heston, contrary to his usual carefulness, had neglected to lock the door after the disgruntled bell boy's departure. Or, perhaps, what is more likely, Fate loomed up on the horizon when a Canadian dime was transferred to a boy's expectant palm. Had the coin been the quarter which, according to our best hotel etiquette, the occasion demanded, the door would not have been slammed so hard as to rebound beyond the spring lock.

Be that as it may, while Mr. Heston lay motionless in the bath tub, his tired spirit lulled to semi-consciousness by the tepid water, a gentleman of prepossessing appearance tripped lightly down the hotel corridor. The fact that the door of Mr. Heston's apartment stood ajar did not escape his attention; the prepossessing gentleman made his living, and, from his appearance it seemed a fairly good living, by not allowing any such details to escape his attention. Pausing long enough to make sure that no one was in sight, he pushed open the door, and, with the key to his own room held in plain view of anyone who might be within, entered, and closed the door behind him.

Mr. Heston remained blissfully unconscious of what was taking place in his bedroom, until, rousing himself at last from his doze, his glance happened to wander through the half-open door and rest upon the mirror. For an instant he sat paralyzed, watching with fascinated interest the reflection of a debonair gentleman who seemed to be occupied in closing a bulging travelling bag. Mr. Heston gasped, and as he gasped he sprang from the tub and rushed into the bedroom. Apparently he was unexpected, for the gentleman with the travelling bag, Mr. Heston's travelling bag, seemed somewhat startled, but the catapult-like entrance of a person of cadaverous appearance,

clad in the costume prescribed for the most informal hours at a Turkish bath, is enough to startle anyone.

Unfortunately for Mr. Heston, the bed lay between him and the object of his interest, and when he had managed to skid around the foot of the bed, both object and bag were disappearing through the door. The flying leap which he made for the escaping coat tails would have filled John Heston, Jr., with admiration, had he been there to witness the exhibition; but sad to relate, the attempted tackle failed. That it was a game attempt to bring down a runner from behind, seemed to bring no consolation to Mr. Heston's sorely tried soul, for, even as he stumbled through the open doorway and crashed into the opposite wall, he set up a cry of "Stop thief!" Down the corridor, which now reverberated with Mr. Heston's cries, the thief, instead of stopping as per request, flew with an amazing burst of speed, and disappeared around a corner.

The slam of a door close at hand, the distant sound of hurrying footsteps, and a sinking sensation at the pit of the stomach seemed to reach Mr. Heston simultaneously, although, in reality, the sinking sensation was the direct result of the slamming door and the hurrying steps. The door in question was none other than the one leading to Mr. Heston's apartment, and, upon this occasion, as the unfortunate gentleman immediately discovered, the spring lock had done its duty.

The east wind has been responsible for much mischief, but never, from Mr. Heston's viewpoint, had it played such a diabolical prank as this.

The footsteps were rapidly approaching when Mr. Heston, abandoning his futile efforts to force the door, fled in panic-stricken terror in search of some haven of refuge. A scandalized feminine shriek and the slam of yet another

door, gave him the pleasant information that he had not been unobserved and, in wild-eyed frenzy, he sought something, anything, which might serve to shield his nakedness from a jeering world. A cocoa fibre mat outside the door of some favored guest caught his attention, and, as it was the one and only thing movable in sight, (one might think that the hotel management expected the arrival of a college football team,) he made a dash for it.

Now, a cocoa fibre door mat¹ has its uses in this world, and it probably fulfills its destiny just as successfully as do many other things with a higher mission in life, but as a substitute for wearing apparel it is a dismal failure; nor can it be said that it meets with much success as an understudy for a piece of garden shrubbery, behind which unfortunate naked gentlemen may hide. Mr. Heston had added but little to his personal adornment when frantically he seized upon the cocoa fibre door mat.

"This is a nightmare," he moaned, "and I'll wake up in a minute, I know, but it's awful, awful!"

And the distracted man kept repeating, "I'll wake up in a minute; I'll wake up in a minute," as he dashed back and forth.

The words "Service Room," painted on a door past which Mr. Heston had several times hurtled in unseeing terror, at last forced themselves upon his notice. He made for that room like a homing pigeon, and fell into its sheltering darkness just too late to be unseen by the person of the heavy tread, who at that instant, made his appearance.

The title "Service Room" was a misnomer, for the room was merely a closet, but its musty odor of old brooms, damp rags, and yellow soap was, to Mr. Heston's quivering nostrils, as a spice-laden breeze from Araby the Blest. He was not destined, however, long to enjoy

the privacy of his wildly sought refuge.

When the heavy footsteps halted outside his closet door, Mr. Heston's ears were assailed by a shrill feminine voice. "He's in there," the voice said, "in that service room."

"It's all right, now, ma'am," a masculine voice assured her, "I'll have him out there in a jiffy." And then the voice was drowned in a perfect bedlam of semi-hysterical conversation, which, to Mr. Heston's tortured mind, seemed to emanate from every door along the corridor. It was quite evident that his cry of "Stop thief" had reached other ears than those of the despoiler of his wardrobe and the owner of the heavy footsteps.

In the struggle which ensued, Mr. Heston was clearly at a disadvantage, for one hand was employed in the obvious necessity of adjusting the intricate folds of his cocoa fibre mat draperies. Presently the door was yanked open, and with the door, came Mr. Heston, clinging tenaciously to the handle.

"For the love o' Mike," gasped the heavy footstep person, a house detective, "where'd you come from?"

The redoubled chorus of female shrieks would have drowned any answer which the unhappy man might have made even had he been in a condition for coherent speech, which, most decidedly, he was not. Mr. Heston was a man of great natural dignity, but even Mr. Heston, his son's opinion to the contrary notwithstanding, was human, and—well, even an ex-vice-president of these more or less United States could scarcely, under similar circumstances, be expected to retain that dignity of bearing for which he is noted. No, a gentleman whose entire visible wardrobe consists of a hastily devised toga, a toga which but an instant before had appeared to the world as a door mat and nothing

else, cannot fairly be held to account if his dignity, for the nonce, seems to have disappeared into thin air.

"Say," announced the detective somewhat belligerently, and with less tact than a hotel employee is supposed to use toward paying guests, "if you women is so horrified at seeing a naked man there ain't no law compellin' you to stand peekin' out o' your doors, you know."

The response to this observation was the instant and indignant slamming of many doors, but, by the time Mr. Heston had been soothed to a condition in which he was able to inform the detective whence he had come, they were all again open, and twenty pairs of sensation-seeking eyes followed the line of march to Mr. Heston's room. No gauntlet ever contrived by blood-thirsty redskins could have held the terror for its unfortunate victim as did that double row of eyes for the cringing wretch with the door mat.

With the aid of his pass key the detective opened the door to Mr. Heston's room and glanced about. The one thing noticeable was the entire lack of anything not the property of the hotel. The visitor had made a clean sweep, not even scorning to take Mr. Heston's soft coal smoked collar.

"Why," his captor exclaimed, "this ain't your room; this room's empty." And the unfortunate part of it was, that by this time the only thing of which Mr. Heston was absolutely sure, was that he was in the midst of the most unpleasant nightmare he had ever experienced. No, he wasn't sure, the detective probably was right; undoubtedly, this was not his room. He didn't know where it was; he thought he remembered the number was 816, but he wasn't sure; if this was 816, and it was not his room, as the detective assured him it was not, then he didn't know where it was. He had reached the state of mind that when

his inquisitor asked if he had taken it with him when he went to give his Salome act in the corridor, he could not be certain about it.

"It's the nut fact'ry for yours, all right," the detective cheerfully informed him. "You come along with me."

With his door mat replaced by a blanket stripped from the bed in room 816, Mr. Heston meekly followed his captor to the service elevator, and presently found himself in the trunk room surrounded by a group of grinning porters.

"Now," the detective whom the porters addressed as Mr. Clancy reasoned aloud, "it ain't likely you was dressed in that there door mat when you come in, so your clothes must be somewheres around. You can't seem to remember the number of your room, so I guess I'll try and locate it for you before I telephone for the wagon."

"My clothes were stolen," Mr. Heston exclaimed, convinced at last that he was not enjoying a most realistic nightmare; "they were stolen while I was in the bath tub."

"Stolen, eh?" Mr. Clancy, with a wink at the porters, commented sympathetically, "now, that's too bad, ain't it."

The detective, not unnaturally, had jumped to the conclusion that Mr. Heston was demented, and, detective-like, it was extremely difficult for him to adjust his point of view; in fact, he did not try.

"I'll just call up the office," he resumed, "and get the right number of your room. 'What's your name?'"

Mr. Heston supplied the desired information, and sat huddled up on a trunk while Mr. Clancy carried on a low-toned conversation at the telephone in the corner.

"Call the wagon," he commanded one of the porters, when at last he hung up the receiver.

Mr. Clancy regarded the blanket-wrapped figure with narrow-eyed suspicion. "So," he said, after a long scrutiny, "you poor boob, you don't even know what your name is, eh?"

"Don't know what my name is!" Mr. Heston echoed, "what do you mean? Of course I know what my name is!"

"Well," Mr. Clancy returned, there ain't no John Heston registered in this hotel."

And then Mr. Heston remembered! To avoid being interviewed upon the unpleasant subject of John Heston, Jr.'s, latest escapade, Fate had urged her unhappy puppet to register under an assumed name, and so, upon the hotel books, he appeared as John Williams of New York.

The arrival of two blue-coated representatives of the city's police department cut short the disjointed history of Mr. Heston's unbelievable chapter of accidents which he was endeavoring to pour into the deaf ear of the house detective. Mr. Heston, now clad in a pair of cast-off overalls and two dilapidated brogan's, not mates, which had been donated by the engineer's department, his gaunt frame hidden by an overcoat grudgingly loaned by a waiter, (and only loaned as its owner took especial pains to impress upon all present,) his gray head concealed by the tattered ruin of a one-time derby hat, set forth for the police station.

Arrested, humiliated, stripped of his dignity, looked upon with suspicion as either drunk or demented, and all because his clothing had been stolen! The unfortunate man was thoroughly cowed.

The lieutenant behind the desk at the station house was a man of rare intelligence, at least, so he seemed to the distraught gentleman in the waiter's overcoat, for the police official readily agreed to try to reach, for purposes of identification, Mr. John Heston, Jr.,

before an alienist was summoned; and Mr. John Heston, Jr., the lieutenant surmised, would not be difficult to locate.

Mr. John Heston, Sr., shifted uneasily from one foot to the other for the length of time required for an officer to walk the length of a row of cells, unlock a door, and return to the desk; with the officer appeared Mr. Heston's erring son, rather crestfallen and somewhat the worse for wear.

"You know this man, Jack?" asked the lieutenant, who seemed to be on the most surprising terms of intimacy with his prisoner. "He says you can identify him."

Jack turned and surveyed the miserable individual by the desk, whom he had not before honored by so much as a glance. He started visibly, and then a broad grin slowly enveloped his features.

"No," he said, at last, shaking his head, "I don't know him; never saw him before. By Jove," he continued hastily, but with peculiar emphasis, as his father seemed to be recovering from the horrid shock, "when you sent for me I thought sure it must be my father; he's in town; Cohen, who left here not ten minutes ago, told me."

Although his conversation was addressed to the lieutenant, young Mr. Heston's gaze never left his father's face; and that face was a study in various and conflicting emotions.

Mr. Heston swallowed, moistened his lips, then swallowed once more, before he could sufficiently master his feelings to make himself understood.

"May I,—eh, may I speak with this young man in private?" he faltered.

"Go as far as you like," the lieutenant acquiesced, with a wave of his hand toward a deserted corner of the room.

Two minutes later the pair returned to the desk.

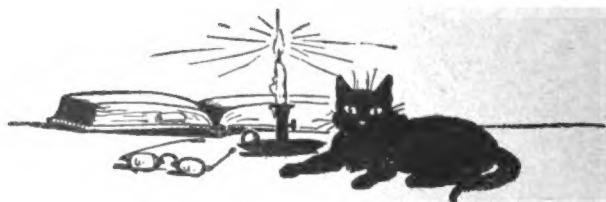
"We have come, Lieutenant," Mr. Heston, Jr., explained, "to get each other out of hock. I have found that I do know this person, after all. It was his vaudeville tramp make-up that fooled me. He's my father, and he's not off his nut, at all. Somebody nipped his clothes when he was in the bath tub, and when he chased after him, the door blew shut and he was locked out in the hall. No wonder they thought he was looney. Now, will you kindly 'phone for Cohen again, because Dad has decided to bail me out, after all; disgrace to the family, you know."

The lieutenant reached for the 'phone,

and, without a word of comment, requested Central once more to connect him with the office of Mr. Cohen. Men behind city police desks are immune against surprise.

"It's never again for me, Dad, I know," Jack announced, as he and his father sat side by side on the wooden bench, awaiting the arrival of Mr. Cohen, "but, of course, if something should turn up sometime,—well, I don't suppose the folks at home could believe such a story as this, do you?"

Mr. Heston's interest seemed to center upon the two brogans which were not mates, and he made no reply.



Circumstantial Evidence

BY LAWRENCE H. LANDEN

Would you send a man to his death on circumstantial evidence? This much discussed legal question with its fine distinctions, is further involved, not answered, by this story of a cold and cleverly executed murder.



I CANNOT sleep to-night, and all because of Lindlow and the story he told me. Ordinarily such things would not effect me, but my nerves are in a frightful condition, and Lindlow appears to be peculiarly qualified to upset them. I came all the way from San Francisco up to this lonely mountain resort to avoid just such persons as Lindlow. What he is doing here I cannot imagine, still less why he should single me out as the recipient of his confidences. I have not the slightest use either for the man or his mad notions. I never saw a man that I so thoroughly disapproved of. I resent his manners, his actions, his speech. I resent the cold mockery of his gray eyes, the cynical droop of his mouth. I resent his very existence.

When, to-day after lunch, he came out on the veranda, walking with that light, springy step of his, and glowing with that physical well-being which seems to be his without any conscious effort on his part, I instantly felt all my resentment mounting within me. I found time to disapprove of the newspaper that he carried, for I have myself forsworn newspapers during my stay here; and when he sat down in a rocker and, instead of quietly reading his paper, turned to me and began to speak, my irritation redoubled. I had an impulse to move away, but I did not like the idea of giving up my hammock, the veranda

being the most comfortable place during the hot afternoon hours. Besides, why should I allow this man's comings and goings to interfere with my own?

He tapped the paper on his knee. "I see they hung that fellow Trevitt yesterday," he began.

I answered him with a noncommittal grunt. I decided that I would not be drawn into a conversation. But he would not be denied.

"It was purely circumstantial evidence, as I suppose you know," he said, and, as I made no reply, he led with a direct question:

"Do you believe in hanging on circumstantial evidence?"

"I don't see why not," I retorted with some brusqueness. And then, a little lamely: "That is, provided the evidence is conclusive."

"No circumstantial evidence is conclusive," he said. "Now, I do not believe that this Trevitt was guilty. To be sure, the story he told in his defence sounded impossible. But a man of Trevitt's intelligence does not tell an impossible story unless it is true. The most conclusive circumstantial evidence may prove the direct opposite to the real facts."

"You will have to prove that," I challenged, nettled by his positiveness.

"Very well. I'll tell you a little true story, if you care to listen, that ought to prove my contention."

I groaned inwardly, but I had fairly let myself in for it.

"But in order," he continued, "that you may understand the small part I played in the events that I am going to relate, I must acquaint you with some of my views. In the first place, I don't believe in this hanging business at all. It is as barbarous as it is useless. We persist in it only because we are a race of barbarians, and must needs give visible evidence of our barbarous state."

"Does that include yourself?" I could not help but ask. But he ignored the question.

"I believe, furthermore, that one murder does not necessarily make a murderer."

"Not a murderer!" I almost gasped in my astonishment.

"No. Many—most of those convicted of murder do not have the murderer's psychology. They are very much like you and me. Given the same circumstances we would probably have acted precisely as they did. They are not more culpable, only more unfortunate, than we. What, then, is to be gained by killing them? Why can't we get off our high horse of self-righteousness and conceit, and inquire a little into the causes for men's actions? Why? Because, as I said, we are a race of barbarians, and like barbarians we strike blindly, unreasoningly."

A man of unusual qualities is Lindlow, that I must admit although I dislike him. One has to listen to him whether he likes it or not. His sentences, flung out quickly in a low, even tone, give no suggestion of nervousness, but rather of a quiet energy under perfect control, and his every word goes home.

"But to my story," he went on. "In the town of my birth—where that is located or what its name is does not matter—there lived John Armstrong and his young wife. They had not been married long enough to be disillusioned, and they were happy as a pair of birds

in spring. Then the other man came on the scene.

"His name was Overton—James Overton. That, at least, was what he called himself. He lived at the best hotel in town and seemed to be abundantly supplied with money. No one knew anything definite about him, who he was or whence he came; in spite of this many stories circulated about him. He had travelled extensively, seemingly all over the world. Very interesting and very romantic the unsophisticated young damsels of the town found him, and I have no doubt that he was the hero of many a day-dream.

"There is a certain type of man that seems to possess a peculiar fascination for the gentler sex, while we ordinary mortals are unable to puzzle out whereof their charms consist. James Overton was one of these; physically unattractive, even repulsive, with his bald head, florid face and bulging waist-line. And if ever the physical marks of a man gave his mental measure this was true in the case of James Overton. He was a living monument of grossness, vulgarity and egotism—a veritable pig-psychology.

"He was in the habit of riding out on horseback every day. One day as I was crossing a street he came thundering around a corner, and his horse knocked me over. It was wholly accidental—a little carelessness and lack of attention on his part as well as mine. Although badly frightened I was not seriously hurt, and when I got up he cursed me roundly for not getting out of his way. I was only sixteen years of age at that time. There is no vanity like the vanity of sixteen, and he had hurt it to the quick. Then and there I began to hate him. And, what with subsequent happenings, Overton soon took his place in my youthful imagination as the embodiment of all that was base and evil and detestable.

"Mrs. Armstrong was an enthusiastic equestrienne, and was also in the habit of taking daily rides. That's how Overton came to meet her. He found her one day three miles from town with her horse gone lame. To ride the animal back to town was out of the question, so he assisted her in finding a farmer who would take it in temporarily, whereupon she rode Overton's horse home, he walking along by her side.

"After that they went out together regularly. Armstrong, if he knew, did not suspect anything wrong. He had never met Overton, although he, like everyone in town, knew him by sight.

"My family was very intimate with the Armstrongs. I, particularly, was possessed of a youthful admiration for Mrs. Armstrong, that approached very close to worship. Therefore, when I discovered the intimacy between her and the man I hated, I did not like it. But I could not suspect my idol of anything that was not perfectly proper, consequently I was as unprepared for what happened as was everybody else. One day Overton suddenly left for parts unknown, and Mrs. Armstrong went with him."

Lindlow paused and extracted a couple of small black cigars from a pocket.

"Have a smoke. No? Very well." He returned one of the cigars to his pocket, and lit the other. His eyes roamed reflectively over the wooded slopes and canyons below us while he blew a few clouds of smoke out on the quiet air. Then he began anew:

"Armstrong went wild. For three months following his wife's disappearance he set a terrible pace, and was probably not sober for a single hour during that time.

"But time, the Master Healer, got in his work, and after three months' absence, Armstrong one morning again entered his office, perfectly sober; a little

the worse for wear, perhaps, but with a healthier, or at least more practical, view of life. And when a year had passed everything was again very much as it had been before his marriage.

"Then Mrs. Armstrong returned. Not the Mrs. Armstrong we had known, but a wreck of her former self, broken in health and spirit. That beast had ruined her, and thrown her from him like a broken plaything.

"She crawled to Armstrong's feet and begged for mercy, begged him to take her back. Of course, he could not do that. But he did what he could. He provided her with a home for the rest of her days, which were not many. The poor thing died six months later.

"But Armstrong, when he first saw her after her return, swore a terrible oath: that he would not rest day or night until he had the life-blood of James Overton. And as soon as he could wind up his affairs he disappeared, never to be seen or heard of in his home-town again.

"I cannot get away from the idea that there is some intelligent force behind all things—call it God, or Fate, or what you like; there are so many evidences of design in the shaping of human destinies. And it was more than a coincidence that it should fall upon me to witness the last act of this drama.

"Twelve years had already passed since the disappearance of John Armstrong, and he was almost forgotten. I was then twenty-nine years old. It so happened that I went on a business trip to Grand Rapids during the summer, and while there I visited an old friend of my father's, a Mr. Waverly, who lived a few miles out of the city. Judge of my surprise when I found James Overton there before me. To be sure, he had changed his name—calling himself Barton Hall—and he was balder, more florid of face, and wider of girth than when I

last saw him, but in spite of this I knew him as soon as I laid eyes on him.

"Overton did not recognize me. He had seen me only once, and I had changed much since the time he knocked me over in the street and cursed me. I did not enlighten him, but I asked Mr. Waverly about him, and was told that the fellow was engaged in business in Grand Rapids. He had drifted into town some six years before, from no one knew where, and, since he had plenty of money, no one asked any questions. He had evidently been knocking about the world a great deal, said Mr. Waverly, but had tired of travel, so he had bought out a manufacturer and settled down. Mr. Waverly also informed me that he had invited the man to his place for purely business reasons.

"By avoiding Overton—or Hall—as much as possible, I managed to make my stay at Waverly's very pleasant. The Waverly house was a queer, ramshackle structure, situated on a steep slope in a very picturesque neighborhood. Originally the house had been a one-story affair, built on a terrace. In later years another wing had been added on the lower side, at right angles with the original building. This new wing had two stories, the upper floor, owing to the difference in elevation, coming on the same level as that of the old house.

"Below the house, but quite close to it, ran a small stream. A concrete dam had been built across this, collecting the water into a good-sized pond, which could be drained at pleasure. At the point where the stream emptied into the pond there was a bridge across.

"I had been at Waverly's about a week when, one day from my room, I saw a man coming across this bridge. Something familiar in his bearing brought me quickly to the window. I knew him on the instant. Although twelve merciless years had put their mark on him I had

not a moment's doubt. It was John Armstrong. As I said, I had known him intimately, and I had seen him the day he swore that he would have James Overton's life-blood. I had never been able to forget the expression that was on his face at that time. And now, as he came across the bridge, I saw that same expression again, only now it had a set, fixed appearance, as if his features had been molded that way. I knew then that it had been there ever since that day of long ago,—that the thought of seeing James Overton's life-blood had been ever-present in his mind through all these years.

"I was surprised afterwards to learn that Armstrong had been in Grand Rapids for some time, and that he had become well acquainted with Overton. He had chummed with him, and outsiders had come to look on the two as great friends. But I soon saw that this was part of a well thought-out plan. Armstrong, nursing his terrible hate through twelve long years had learned patience; and once he had his prey in his clutches he could well afford to bide the most favorable opportunity for the consummation of his revenge. Remember, Overton had never known the man he had wronged, and, as Armstrong had also changed his name, Overton was entirely unaware of the sinister portent in his presence.

"As I said, Armstrong came across the bridge, and not an instant did I doubt his errand. He walked up to the main entrance and asked for Mr. Hall. A servant showed him to Overton's room, and the two men were left alone. A few minutes later a shot was heard. The servants rushed in and found Overton lying across the bed with a bullet in his heart, and Armstrong holding a smoking revolver in his hand with one chamber empty.

"Of course Armstrong was arrested.

Nobody thought he had a chance. His plea of 'not guilty' was considered a fool's plea. His claim was that a man out on the terrace had shot Overton through the open window, and that he himself had fired after the fleeing man, although he had not succeeded in hitting him. Naturally no one wanted to brand himself a fool by professing to believe such a story as that."

Here Lindlow paused again, ostensibly to relight his cigar which had gone out; in reality, I suspected, to give greater effect to the denouement. This little trick did not serve to increase my respect for the fellow; as for the story itself, it had been commonplace enough so far. But I wanted to get it over with, so I hurried him on with an impatient, "Well?"

"He was acquitted," he said curtly.

"What? On such a ridiculous story as that?"

"You," said Lindlow, "know the real facts in the case, and they have prejudiced your judgment. You must remember that the prosecutor and the public did not know the real facts, and to them Armstrong's story might well have seemed improbable at first, but not impossible. There was much evidence to show the close friendship that had existed between the two men, and nobody had ever known them to quarrel. But what carried greatest weight, and what caused the district attorney to drop the case like a hot potato was the fact that, while the revolver found in Armstrong's hand was a thirty-two calibre Smith and Wesson, the bullet that killed Overton was a forty-four. There was some puzzling over the fact that only one shot had been heard, but it was easily shown that a shot fired from the terrace could be heard only very faintly in that part of the house which was occupied at the time, and might easily have escaped notice altogether when no one was listen-

ing for it; while on the other hand a shot fired inside the room could be heard very plainly all through the house."

"I presume," said I, "that you were summoned as a witness?"

"Yes. And my appearance almost resulted disastrously for Armstrong, although through no fault of mine. When I gave my name and address he half rose from his seat, and stared at me with mouth agape. A nice pickle it would have made, had it become known that the defendant had an old score to settle with the murdered man. I, however, gave him a cold stare, and he evidently concluded that I had not recognized him."

"What was your testimony, if I may ask?"

"That I had been taking an afternoon nap on my bed, and had heard and seen nothing."

"You swore to that?"

He shrugged his shoulders. There was a short silence.

"Well," said I, "you said you would prove—certain things, you know, and you have proven nothing. All you have shown is that your—er—friend, John Armstrong, was freed from a charge of murder by circumstantial evidence."

"Exactly. And very conclusive evidence, was it not? Very good. And now I want to tell you, that Armstrong *did* kill Overton, and *I saw it.*"

"You saw it!"

"So I did. My room was in the second story of the new wing that I spoke of. Overton's room was in the old part of the house, and had a large window near the angle formed by the conjunction of the two walls. When the shades were up I could see almost every detail in his room from my window.

"When I saw Armstrong coming I looked over, and saw that Overton was in his room. Instantly I pulled down my window-shade, but I took care to

leave the back of a chair between the shade and the window casing. Through the opening thus produced I had an unobstructed view of the other window, while I could sit well back in my darkened room without being observed.

"I saw Armstrong as he entered Overton's room and closed the door behind him. I saw Overton greet his guest effusively, although I could not hear what was being said. Armstrong seemed preoccupied. He came over to the window and looked out. He glanced at the pond, then gazed at my window long and intently.

"His eyes followed the terrace, then roamed along the shores of the pond and the creek. It was a rather cold day for summer, threatening rain, and no one was about.

"Once more he looked at my window, and, apparently satisfied, turned about and stood with his back against the pane. He spoke a few words, and I saw Overton pull himself up with a start. His usual floridness slowly faded, and a sickly, greenish hue took its place. He stood up unsteadily, and his eyes flew about the room as if measuring the chances of escape. Armstrong's hand went to his pocket, and came back holding a large Colt revolver, with which he covered his victim. Then followed a scene, the like of which I hope never to see again: a miserable wretch begging for his worthless life; pleading and making offers in such agony of fear as only such cowardly scoundrels may know at the imminence of death. What Armstrong said I could not hear, but I could sense it: the outpouring of that intense hatred and murder-lust that had brooded and festered and grown in his brain for twelve long years of unceasing, unrelenting search for the elusive quarry, until it had become an all-absorbing passion, mastering his life and threatening his reason.

"Then all of a sudden I saw Overton crumple up, collapsing on the bed. I was surprised, for I had heard no report. I was still wondering when Armstrong, after watching the silent form of his enemy for a moment, turned very deliberately and opened the window. But in the fraction of a second that he hesitated before he sent the pistol flying through the air to splash into the pond below, I saw and understood: there was a Maxim silencer attached to the muzzle of the revolver.

"Next Armstrong pulled out the Smith and Wesson, and, standing well back in the room, fired a shot out through the open window. This it was that gave the alarm. He never tried to escape. Having thrown away the only evidence against him, he could remain without fear to play the role of the unjustly accused. And this he did successfully, only losing his composure once,—the time he recognized me in the court-room.

"You see the ingeniousness of his plan? The use of the Maxim silencer gave him plenty of time. Had he desired he could have gone away quietly, and might have put considerable distance between himself and the scene of his deed before its discovery. But such a course would inevitably have branded him as the perpetrator, whereas, by indulging in a little stage-play, he succeeded in effectively turning suspicion from himself. I leave it to you—it would have been a shame for me to spoil a plot like that."

"Undoubtedly," said I coldly. "But in a society governed by law and order, and not by brute force—"

"'Law and order'!" he jeered. "Would justice have been served by the hanging of John Armstrong? That is the question. The world lost nothing with James Overton. And if Armstrong lived to be a thousand years old he would never commit another murder.

What good would it have done, then, to hang him?"

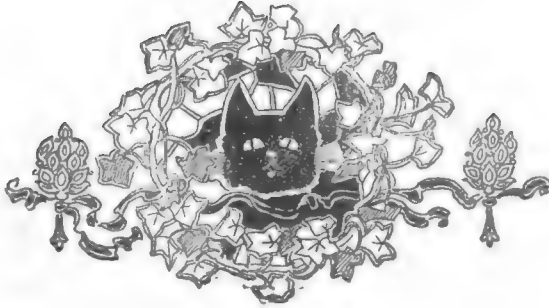
"Are you aware," said I, "that what you have just told me might result in rather disagreeable consequences for you?"

"No," he said, as he arose to go. "You can prove nothing. Perhaps, after all, I did sleep, as I swore in court, and neither heard nor saw anything. Perhaps what I have just told you is simply

a phantasy—an explanation that I have worked out in my own mind. You see, the pond below the house has been drained several times, and the Colt forty-four has never been found."

"And no wonder," I sneered. "You knew where it was, and fished it out at your first opportunity."

His only answer was a mocking laugh as he went down the steps, and disappeared, walking briskly, among the trees.



The Lady and the Beast

BY J. L. SHERARD

In modern settings a young gallant saves his lady fair from an escaped tiger and what maiden could resist such a suitor even though—but she didn't know it!



BURNEY was tired, disheartened and disgusted. The sixty days of his professional life had panned out no more productive of dollars than an orange tree of golden fruit within the Arctic circle.

Moreover, Mr. Leighton had offered him a fresh insult that very morning, and the possibility of seeing Julia again seemed more remote than ever.

Yielding to a sudden impulse of protest, he stopped reading and hurled the volume on pleading and practice to the floor, twisting and damaging its cover of buckram. He gazed at the wreck abstractedly for a moment, then picked it up, repentant, brushed off the dust with his handkerchief and restored it to its proper place in the book-case.

"It's like traveling across an interminable desert under a parching sun," he growled, pacing back and forth, moodily. "No income, and dry—ye gods! It makes me thirsty to look at a law book. I'm fast acquiring the feeling of an Egyptian mummy transplanted to the banks of the East river. Adventure, romance—not to mention the important item of tens and twenties—they seem to have no standing in this dry-as-dust calling, and, if this thing doesn't end at once, I'm going to quit and join the strike-breakers' union."

Thus he railed sincerely at the law, but his thoughts were mostly of the girl.

Some one knocked sharply at the door. Burney's lips tightened in an expression of real distress. "A bill collector," he muttered, "and the bank busted!"

The visitor, a short, stocky man who was out of breath from his haste in climbing the flight of steps, seemed greatly excited.

"Dose show people have ruint me—ruint me!" he began hysterically, resting his hands on the flat top desk for support. "Oh, my poor gyarden, my fence, my asparagus—all ruint! Robbers gone—no pay—an' now de poorhouse is reachin' its hand for me. It was my livin'. Meester Burney, you can help me—you can—"

Burney made him sit down and tell his story calmly and coherently. He soon learned from the old man that the Great Renowned Smith Shows, after a lean week's engagement, had just broken camp preparatory to their assault upon the next town. A careless driver had bumped his heavy wagon against the frail fence enclosing old Becker's garden, snapping the rotten posts and causing the wreck to fall upon his tender truck. Once down, the hurrying force of movers, cramped for space in which to turn their wagons, overran asparagus, peas, strawberries, and all the healthy and succulent young things the old gardner relied upon for his hard living.

The manager of the shows refused to pay damages. Baffled in his friendly efforts at redress, Becker was desperate.

That was the case of Burney's client.

Rockton was a small manufacturing town lying within two miles of the state line. The next village was just over the border, and the Smith aggregation, practising every possible economy, had concluded that it would be cheaper to move their baggage and animals by the drayage route than to use the railroad. In an hour perhaps, all their property would be in another state, as safely out of the jurisdiction of the court as if it were a thousand miles away.

Burney's heart bounded with the joy of the undefeated. This was action, indeed, the rattling of the law's dry bones. "Come!" he commanded, and started out at a lively clip. The old man quickened his pace into a brisk run to keep up with his patron.

Armed with a warrant of attachment, issued by a magistrate who never varied from his slow and provoking routine no matter how urgent the case, Joe Hale, the sheriff, was dispatched in hot pursuit to serve the writ before the drivers could whip their teams across the fatal state line.

When he overtook the moving rear-guard of the Great Renowned, the procession, with the exception of two wagons, was winding along the sinuous road safe in the land of refuge. It was a land of refuge in more than the ordinary sense, for the two distinguished governors were at daggers' points, and exchanged courtesies by declining to honor each other's requisitions.

Hale allowed the wagon loaded with tent poles to pass unmolested into foreign territory, but the last in the long line he stopped peremptorily. It conveyed a canvas-covered cage and suggested possibilities of value.

"Turn right around and drive back to town," Hale commanded. "We won't do nothin' to Jim's team, of course, but we want that cargo on it delivered into

our hands forthwith. Old Smith must be a bloodthirsty pirate—the kind that delights to skin widows and orphans."

Smith, the manager, under whose name the aggregation displayed "the greatest show on earth," was somewhere ahead, perhaps in the town of his destination, and he did not learn of the ill luck that had befallen one of his attractions until the tardy arrival of the man who formed the listless tail of the procession.

It was a legal proceeding out of the ordinary, and Hale rose grandly to the dignity and the importance the occasion demanded. He summoned a posse, who took hold of the cage very gingerly and carried it into the sheriff's office, where they carefully deposited it upon the long table in the middle of the room.

"What's in it?" blustered Hale. "Betcher it's that funny bunch of monkeys, or a gyascutus, or maybe the sacred cow. Some bloomin' harmless varmint, you c'n depend. That's my usual luck. Come, boys, let's see the show!"

Burney remonstrated that it would be best not to interfere with the property. Whatever the cage contained, it was in the sheriff's possession and should be held undisturbed until the proprietor of the shows arrived and Becker's claim satisfied.

But the sheriff's curiosity was aroused hopelessly. Urged on by the good-natured chaffing of his friends, he was determined to see inside. Burney entertained the same secret desire, but outwardly he protested that it would be best to wait until Smith appeared.

The sheriff, calmly ignoring the advice, unfastened the canvas and slipped it off the cage.

"What'd I tell you?" he spoke in disgust, stepping back and pointing an accusing finger at the freshly painted figure of a mountain antelope. "Gimme the axe. Let the critter git out."

Again Burney protested. "It will only serve to damage Mr. Smith's property, for which you will be liable," he argued. "What's the use of it?"

"Don't bother me," the sheriff retorted good-humoredly. "I'm not goin' to hurt anything. I want to see the animal at close range. P'haps I'll buy him for the town zoo."

With the aid of an axe, Hale began prying open the lock with a zeal worthy of a better cause. In the stubborn work of forcing it, he lost his patience. To add to his provocation, he struck his thumb a painful blow, and maddened by the taunts of the few onlookers in the office, unwisely he battered the side of the cage with staggering momentum. There was the crash of steel on steel, and the axe had to be wrenched loose from the opening it made in the wood and iron work.

Under the repeated hammering, jarring and pushing, the cage had crept unnoticed, inch by inch, nearer the edge of the table. When Hale pried the axe free, the cage lurched suddenly with the rebound, and, before those present could realize what was happening, it tumbled heavily on the floor, landing upside down.

The sheriff's blow had struck a fatally weak place on the lock, breaking clean the hasp.

The animal within, enraged and frantic, plunged with all its brute strength against the iron bars. There was a desperate straining, the sudden snap of steel, and a quivering tiger, long, lean and threatening, leaped into the open!

It was the great "untamed"—the scourge of the jungle!

The men in the office, stricken with panic, beat a hasty retreat—all but Hale, Burney and the deputy. Hale jerked at his holster, then remembered, with a sickening tug at his heart, that he had laid his pistol aside with his coat when

he took up the axe in his energetic way to explore the hidden mystery of the cage. He cursed himself for his indiscretion. The deputy drew his gun and fired excitedly, missing his mark by a couple of feet. Burney sprang forward, knocked his arm up, and the second bullet went into the ceiling.

All this happened in an instant. The tiger, dazed and frantic, was impelled just then more by an instinct of safety than one of revenge. It leaped upon the table, crouched down with muscles tense and tail swishing from side to side, and sprang through the open window to the street below.

A wild pony, unbridled and unrestrained, can create a respectable panic on the streets, but for the genuine article, done to the accompaniment of flying skirts and the scampering of brave feet, one tiger is as good as a jungle of wild beasts.

The animal sniffed suspiciously at this strange taste of liberty, then scurried from point to point around the courthouse square, at an utter loss apparently, as to the proper etiquette to follow. The people—when they dared—looked out from their places of safety behind bolted doors, dumb, frightened, waiting.

From the window of the sheriff's office Burney coaxed and teased the lean giant, feeling that a chance effort at subjection was better than none at all; but, if there came any result from this jargon, it was to drive the tiger in the opposite direction.

In front of the bank the animal stood uncertainly for a moment. Then, with the suddenness and force of an arrow, it sprang through the plate-glass window, tearing a great hole in it and leaving a shower of falling glass in its wake.

This swift change of scene Burney saw from the window. Help, instant and effective, was needed to save those at work in the bank.

The young lawyer swung himself lightly to the ground and rushed across the square. He pushed the bank door open and went in. A glance revealed the dangerous situation. The cashier was in hiding under a table, the clerk, the teller and the bookkeeper, crouched in corners or behind the shelter of adding machine or piles of ledgers.

But the bank's president, Mr. Leighton, stood directly in front of the tiger, seemingly hypnotized and unable to escape.

Burney's entrance caused the beast to turn its head slightly, and in that fleeting moment of hope Leighton came to his senses sufficiently to break the tragic tableau. He was standing just in front of the door leading into the vault. Quickly he darted into this haven of safety and caught at the massive iron door to swing it into position behind him.

But the tiger was too quick for him. It plunged through the narrowing space, striking the president a sideling glance and hurling him against the far wall of the vault.

Burney, already inside the railing and feeling no concern about his own safety, ran into the vault and dragged Mr. Leighton out. Then he turned quickly to close the inner door, slamming it shut as the tiger lunged heavily against it. But in that brief interval the teller, beside himself with fear, threw his weight against the outer door, and it swung ponderously into place with a click.

Here was a nerve-racking position, indeed. Those on the outside immediately became sensible of what they conceived to be Burney's perilous situation. Locked in a dark vault with a savage tiger—what other outcome could there be but death, swift and horrible?

And yet no one had the courage or the presence of mind to attempt to open the

door. The sheriff entered, and a hasty conference was held. But before it was over and a definite decision had been reached, Smith and his trainer, excited and panting for breath, rushed into the lobby. The situation was hurriedly explained to them, and at their impatient request the cashier applied himself nervously to the task of turning on the combination.

The trainer, alive to the advertising value of his position, went in boldly, closed the door behind him and turned on the electric light.

The door opened. Burney came out with a smile—the smile was on his face and not on the tiger's—and stepped into the congratulatory arms of Mr. Leighton.

The old gentleman patted him affectionately on the back, and, drawing him aside, whispered something in his ear. Burney seemed immensely pleased, for he replied with a hearty handshake.

Smith and his trainer got the tiger back into its cage without serious difficulty, paid Becker his claim for damages, cursed the rashness of the sheriff, and went their way rejoicing across the state line.

But before his departure, the proprietor of the "Great Renowned" got a chance to draw Burney aside for a private talk.

"For the love o' Mike, my boy, don't give me away," begged the man of the show. "That tiger is as harmless as a lamb. You can play the Nero stunt to the queen's taste, and nobody will be the wiser because of it. Is it a trade?"

"It is!" agreed Burney emphatically, shaking his new friend's hand warmly. "But, to satisfy my curiosity, tell me one thing before you go. How did you happen to put the tiger into the antelope's cage?"

Smith laughed. "The antelope died

just before we came here, and we were using it temporarily until the tiger's old cage could be repaired."

That evening Burney sat in the Leighton parlor the first time for many months, talking to Julia. He had been engaged to the girl for some time, but her father had interposed his objections in a most strenuous manner and refused absolutely to allow the presuming young fellow to come to his house.

"Oh, I was never in any real danger in the vault," Burney was explaining to her for the ninth time. "It felt a little creepy, I admit, standing there in the dark, but the inner door was safely locked between me and the tiger and the outer simply stood between me and

fresh air. And, thanks to the silence of the trainer, your father and all the rest of them thought I was exposed to the beast all the time and came out like a second Daniel. But I get the honor and the glory and—the reward. That's what counts. I am satisfied."

And the girl in her happiness made him tell it all over again!

The next morning in his office, after dismissing two substantial clients, he picked up the volume on pleading and practice and began reading under the sub-title "Attachment."

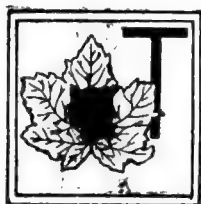
"It's all a question of luck and temperament," he commented, for between the lines the dry-as-dust text was alive with romance and adventure and—love!



Playing It Straight

BY J. BRANT

There is a lot of cynicism in the fortune-telling business and a lot of human nature, too, as this story of two prospectors who "played" a seer's advice, proves.



THIRTY years ago Old Man Davis went alone up into the Black Range from Fairview, crossed the Divide at Hoyt Creek with his prospector's

kit, and stayed a month with the bears and blacktail bucks and Apaches among the canyons which form the head of the Gila.

When he returned his pack and pockets bulged with nuggets of solid gold, yellow and pure and heavy.

Old Man Davis then proceeded to go on a "bust" which lasted two weeks and spread from Chloride on one side of Fairview to Fluorine on the other. Big times were common at the camps in those days, but the bust of Old Man Davis beat them all. The supply of nuggets ran out just ahead of the supply of rum, and Old Man Davis sobered up.

Bad whiskey has let out many secrets, but it did not let out the location of the new mine. Old Man Davis was in his seventies and was on his guard drunk or sober. He talked at length and loudly of the richness of his find, and of the gold he had taken out and hidden because of his inability to pack it in; but of the hiding place he said not a word.

Nevertheless fifty hopeful men had taken up the trail before the end of the spree. Old Man Davis grinned when he heard it, and waited patiently in Fairview. And by ones and twos the fifty came back, disappointed.

Then Old Man Davis started out alone. He had no partner, and made it plain by repeated refusals that he wanted none. He was secretly followed, and he knew he would be. But he was a fox and threw them off. They all returned at last and were made much sport of, after the customary treatment of unsuccessful sleuths.

Old Man Davis had promised to be back within a week with another load of gold. But the week passed, and another, and another, and he did not return. People began to get anxious—not for the safety of Old Man Davis, but the safety of the gold he was bringing.

Then one day he came crawling in nearly starved, and so weak he could scarcely drag himself along. And not an ounce of gold did he bring with him.

At last they got the story out of him, though it was hard work for he was ashamed. So carefully had he concealed his trail that in three weeks of constant search he had not been able to get back to his mines.

A week later he tried again, and came back more discouraged than before. On the third attempt he asked for help, and half the population of the three camps went with him. They found nothing.

Many times after that did Old Man Davis seek his lost mine, taking with him those who would go, going alone if none would follow. His disappointment was affecting his mind, and he mumbled often to himself, always about his lost diggings. People paid less and less at-

tention to him, though they treated him with respect because of the memory of the Big Bust.

One morning they found him dead in his cabin. There was a smile on his face,—a smile that made one think that at last he had found his lost claim. He was buried on the hillside with scant ceremony; at that time and place it was not considered fashionable to die peacefully in one's bed.

All that he left was a deep and lasting curiosity as to the location of the lost Davis Diggings—excellent material for clairvoyants and the like.

Mademoiselle Zona, whose real name was Maggie Devine, looked long and carefully through the peek-hole in the curtain at the stranger who had just entered the Zona Fortune Telling Parlors.

"You read him, Nora," she whispered at last to her sister, "and see what you can make out of him. He looks to me like a cross between a cattleman and a farmer. I'm going to take another look at his hat."

Nora Devine took her turn at the peek-hole. She was fully as important to the establishment as her sister, for she was the person behind the strings. But her customers never saw her, never knew of her existence, so she never had to change her name from plain Nora Devine.

In a minute Mademoiselle Zona returned.

"It's a real hat all right," she whispered, "so he ain't a farmer. Must be a cattleman."

"Cattleman nothing! Look at those hands, and the size of his feet. You sure are getting stale from overwork, Maggie. That guy ain't either a cattleman or a farmer, though I'm not so sure as to his not being a cross between. He's a miner."

Mademoiselle Zona took another look

to satisfy herself as to the correctness of this diagnosis, and then hurried after her sister to the back room to consult the mining news in the files of daily papers.

"Can't be he's from the North. He's not as red as that feller from Alaska last week—more real tan. Maybe he's from Mexico. Here's a director's meeting for a bankrupt mine in the Black Range. James M. Reed is it or I'm a turkey. J. M. R. is in his hat. Look up Black Range, Maggie."

It was a chance, but if you are going to make a reputation at fortune telling you have got to take chances.

Maggie looked under the B's in a scrap-book full of newspaper clippings, and hastily ran through a reporter's story of the lost Davis Diggings.

Dressed like an Egyptian princess Mademoiselle Zona floated into the presence of the impatient and somewhat skeptical Jimmy Reed, for he it was, and proceeded to fade into a trance. She told him his right name and his business and where he came from, and his skepticism vanished. The rest was easy.

Mademoiselle Zona had had much experience with prospectors and knew that there was but one thing that brought them to her. An ordinary man might come for a hundred reasons, with love affairs predominating. But given a mining man, and invariably he came to find out just where to sink his pick to turn up ore. It was a lead pipe cinch, no guess work about it.

"Of course she was on the square," confided Jimmy later to his partner, Hobe Sperry. "Didn't she tell me my real name and my age and weight and horrible past while she was fainted in that chair? All the time her soul was communing with angels. How could she have faked when she never saw me before and nobody knew I was coming? And then her wandering spirit

ran on to Old Man Davis, who it seems had been hankering to get into communication with me for some time. Davis said he'd been watching me because he knew I'd been thinking a lot about his lost diggings lately on account of my bad luck, and that I'd sort of looked for 'em every time I crossed to the other side. Ain't that so?"

"Yes," admitted Hobe, "that's so."

"Well, it seems Davis has done a lot of considering since he's been dead, and he's got his location all figured out. He took this occasion to pass his secret on to me because of my good looks. It's pretty near the top of the divide, and though he didn't mention any names, it's at the head of one of those canyons south of Dry Diamond. When we get over there I can put my hand right on it, for he described it plain as pyrites, and there ain't any other spot like it in the whole range. We ought to make it in three days easy from Chloride, and we'll start to-morrow."

"We might as well try," consented Hobe, "though I ain't any too hopeful. That's the same kind of talk Old Man Davis kept handing out when he was living, and unless he's changed a lot since he's been dead he's apt to be awful unreliable."

Mademoiselle Zona and invisible sister Nora had started something.

Three months later Mademoiselle Zona observed through the peek-hole the honest features, the hard hands, and the big feet of Jimmy Reed. And because it was her business to remember such things she remembered him.

"It's that Black Range feller again," she whispered to Nora. "I knew he'd come back after the way we hooked him. They always do if you tell them what they're after and don't make any bad mistakes. I'll go in and give him a new set of directions for his lost mine. And I'll bet I'll be handing him messages

from Old Man Davis as long as we're in the business."

"He looks prosperous," commented the practical Nora. "I think he could stand our extra confidential rates."

But Jimmy Reed had not come to hear the latest news from the departed Mr. Davis.

"How-de-do, Miss Zona," he said when she entered. "No, I don't want any future read, not to-day. I've come to settle a little account that me and Hobe Sperry reckon is due you. Those directions that Mr. Davis gave me when I was here last sure caused us a lot of trouble, but in the end we found his mine."

Mademoiselle Zona was accustomed to surprises in her business, but she could not suppress an exclamation of astonishment.

"Yes, we found his diggings," continued Jimmy. "You may not have understood what it was you was telling me that time, you being sort of faint that way. Mr. Davis gave me an idea where his lost claim was located through your spirit, and Hobe and I set out to find it."

"It was a pretty tough country that Mr. Davis made us travel, and lots of times we got mighty discouraged. The sides of some of those canyons was only fit for flys to crawl up. Hobe didn't know you like I did, and used to try to make out you were a fake; his horse fell on his foot, and he suffered so at times he didn't know what he was saying. But I knew you were honest from the first, and the more I thought of you the more I was sure of it. And I did a heap of thinking. I'd see you twenty times a day just as you looked in that chair when you gave me those directions from Mr. Davis. So I knew they were true and kept up and kept Hobe going."

"We hunted about twenty days, going through every canyon mighty careful,

from its head five miles down to make sure we wouldn't pass it over. And just as I was about giving out myself and figuring how I'd come back here and have another talk with Mr. Davis before I tried again, to make sure I'd remembered the directions he'd told me, we stumbled right on the old mine.

"There ain't much else to tell. We made sure it was rich and came in as fast as we could. We got back just in time, for Hobe's leg was mighty bad. He'd got it poisoned some way and was in bed two months.

"A big company made us a fair offer for our claim, and we came back asking twice as much, never thinking they'd take us up. But they did, and paid in cash. And they'll make a good thing out of it,—but what do we care, as long as we've got enough.

"Now I don't know much about women, never having had many dealings with them. But I knew you were honest the minute you came into this room. And so I've come back to make you a little present, which ain't no more than you deserve."

Jimmy Reed handed a slip of paper to Mademoiselle Zona. It was a check for ten thousand dollars.

Maggie Devine shut her eyes, and opened them again to look at the check. Ten thousand dollars! It was enough to gratify every longing of her life. And it was given to her because she was honest!

For a time she sat looking steadily at the check, thinking. Then she slowly handed it back to Jimmy Reed.

"Thank you, Mr. Reed," she said, "but I can't take this money."

"Of course you can," protested Jimmy. "It's your share. Why not?"

"Because I'm not honest. Because I lied to you when you first came, and have been lying most of my life. I can't tell the future any more than you

can. I got your name from a newspaper and had the story of the Davis Diggings in a scrap-book. My name isn't Mademoiselle Zona, it's Maggie Devine. And I lied to you hoping that you would believe me and would come back and pay for more lies. It was just luck and perseverance that made you find the mine. And I can't take it when you think you are giving it to me because I'm honest."

Maggie Devine hurried through the speech and finished in a torrent of words. She knew Nora was listening behind the curtain—could almost hear her angry breathing.

Gradually the meaning of the confession sank into the slow mind of Jimmy Reed. He had been fooled, laughed at and lied to by this trembling little woman who was too honest to take his money.

He looked at her long and earnestly, as if she were some strange animal. Her eyes never wavered from his.

Then Jimmy Reed took the check and tore it,—tore it into many pieces and put the pieces in his pocket. From another pocket he took a check-book, and crossed over to the little desk and wrote.

The new check was made out to Maggie Devine, and was for twenty thousand dollars. He got up and left it on the desk. Maggie noticed that he limped.

"It's yours," he said. "Take it and cut out this business. It's enough for a start, and you can let me know how you are getting on. I lied to you too,—it was my foot that was hurt, not Hobe's, and I was the one who doubted you. Yes, doubted you and cursed you a good many times, up there in the hills. Hobe, who had never seen you, was the one who was sure. And we cleaned up eighty thousand apiece because—because you lied."

Jimmy Reed limped out of the room and they heard the front door close behind him.

It was Nora who dashed to the desk and pounced on the check.

"Splendid!" she cried. "You're wonderful, Maggie! I didn't think it was in you. But you took an awful chance.

I'd never thought of trying the honesty game, and yet it was plain as could be that he was just the kind of man who would fall for it. And I thought your mind was getting stale from overwork! What's the matter with you now? Why, you silly little goose!"

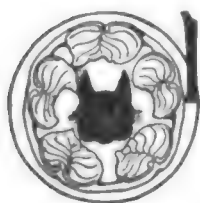
Maggie was crying.



When Man Meets Man

BY FORD WALSH

With death in his eyes and his back to the wall a failure makes a last bid "for money for home" by holding up a fast train. Cornered in the mountains, and dying, he learns his last fling at Fate did not fail.



FIRST got the news from Jud Singer, the night operator in the little lonesome station at Golden Pass. I was Jud's nearest neighbor, and for several months past I had been doing the night "trick" at the still more solitary station of Leon, twenty miles farther up the canyon. We were a lonesome pair, in spite of that twenty miles of wire between us, for within fifty miles around there was nothing to divert us except mountain sides and canyon, the click of our instrument key, and the usual freights, locals, and Overland Limited.

But I didn't get the news by wire. I had been discharged and replaced that very morning, not without cause, but as I am naturally of a social disposition, the wonder to me is not that I occasionally indulged in John Barleycorn, but rather that I didn't imbibe a good deal oftener; there was nothing else to do when the wind came howling down the pass on those long, lonesome nights. Anyway, that's the way I felt about it, though of course our general manager couldn't afford to see it that way.

I had walked all of the twenty miles down the track through the canyon to Golden Pass, and as it was ten at night by the time I got there, I was naturally tired and hungry. I made at once for the station, but as I put my head in the door, Jud didn't seem to recognize me,

for his hand went like a flash to his hip, and before I could protest, he had whipped out his gun and had me covered.

"Hold on a minute, Jud, better see who's here!" I gasped, not knowing what he meant, and wondering why he appeared so excited. At the sound of my voice he lowered the weapon, scrutinized me closely, and without a word returned to his key. I could tell by his clicks of the Morse code that he was talking with the head of the division. His nerves seemed tense and on edge.

"Jud," I interrupted, after waiting for a word from him until my patience was exhausted, "I've been fired."

"I've heard about it," he responded, without looking around, "but I suppose it's your own fault."

"A lot of good that will do me," I retorted quickly. "I suppose you know the general manager won't give me a pass East, not even as far as Pueblo."

"Yes, yes," he nodded, "but this is no time to be howling about such trifles."

"Go to the devil!" I retorted angrily, starting for the door.

"Wait, don't be a fool; there's trouble up the line near your station."

"What, a wreck!" I gasped.

"No; I thought you knew; number 37 has been held up, not more than an hour ago, and the whole division is all worked up about it. One man did it, looked like a dirty little Mexican, so Saunders your successor, reports, and he cleaned the passengers out to the tune of about two thousand. He got away as slick as

a whistle, swallowed up in the dark, and that's all there is to it."

"Sounds natural, Jud; those greasers have no sense, and they'll tackle anything. Any reward offered?" I asked.

"Rather soon, ain't it?"

"It might be for some people. But say, Jud, I've got to get as far as Pueblo or Denver; there's no use of my sticking around here. They'll never take me on again, and worst of all, I'm broke."

"Where's your pay check?"

"Where can I cash it?"

Before he could answer, the key started to click. The head of the division was calling. I listened intently, with my trained ear alert, catching the message before it was finished.

"Five hundred dollars reward dead or alive."

I leaped to my feet so quick that Jud was startled.

"Here," I said, all excited, "let's make an exchange; you take my gun and I'll take yours."

"What for, you loon?" he asked, thoroughly puzzled.

"It ought to be clear; yours is a Colt's .45 and a harder hitter; mine's only a .38."

"What's that got to do with anything?"

"Can't you understand, you rummy, that I'm going to try to do myself a little service? I'm going after this desperado now, while the thing's fresh, and if I ever get him I can tell the general manager and all the rest to go straight to the devil." He handed over his gun, and I handed him mine without a word, and started for the door.

"Better wait until morning," he called after me.

"A man out of a job can't be keeping banker's hours," I retorted bitterly. I had a sort of nervous gnawing in the pit of my stomach, but I tightened my

belt, and plunging into the darkness I turned back up the canyon over the route I had covered that day.

What happened that night and the following day is not worthy of record. I stopped just long enough at Leon to have a few minutes' talk with the new operator who had taken my place. He pointed out to me that there was just one trail that the desperado could have taken in order to stand any chance of getting away, and that was by way of the gulch which led away from Leon to the north. I agreed with him, and started without any delay, determined that if I got on the right trail I would stick to it until death finished either the desperado or me. But hunting down a human being under any circumstances is a rather sickening business. There may be those who can start on a man hunt just as lightly as they would go after a rabbit, and stick to the trail with a determination they would not exercise if in pursuit of elk or a mountain lion, risking dangers and undergoing hardships, all for the sake of bringing to earth some poor unfortunate devil, who, but for the grace of destiny, might be either you or me. It was the reward that got me into this solitary chase that I'm going to tell you about, and I say it's a sickening business at the best, for I ought to know.

It was the second day, when clambering over the top of a mountain trail, fagged out and cursing my luck, that I caught a glimpse of a human figure ahead. He was beyond hailing distance, as a narrow valley with rough rocks and a small stream lay between us, but he was not so far away but what I could see that he was either fagged or injured, for in ascending the trail on that side of the mountain he was half the time on his hands and knees, then up again, and seemingly making better time than I was making, and then down and

crawling again. The sight sent a thrill through me; the five hundred dollars at that instant seemed bigger than a gold mine, and if he had been within range of my gun I would have picked him off without so much as saying "Hello."

I took a hitch in my belt, and with the keenness of a hound urged on my tired limbs. I didn't let up for an instant, kept hard at it until darkness closed in between us, and yet, in spite of his apparent weakened condition, I didn't seem to gain an inch. There was no use of keeping on after dark, though I would have gladly done so if it hadn't been for the risk of my passing by him without my knowing it. So like the night before, I stretched myself out, unsheltered, by the edge of the trail. That was hardship, but that rotten, cursed, filthy money was constantly before my eyes, and I would have stopped short of nothing but murder to get it.

On the third day I was up at the first streak of dawn. I felt chilled to the marrow, and it took some tall walking to get the stiffness out of my joints. I followed the trail for an hour or more, but could find no trace of the fugitive ahead. At the gait I was going I should have caught sight of him by then, and all at once it struck me that he might have left the trail and tried to cut across the mountain to the main line of the Midland just beyond the range. There was only one place where he could have done this, and that was where a small ravine led up to a high ledge just about a half hour's tramp down the trail behind me. I turned back after a moment's reflection, running and scrambling at the risk of breaking my neck.

Arrived at the ravine, I was startled by a cough overhead and to my left. He couldn't have known I was near, or else he was unable to suppress it, but in either case the cough located him. Half way up the almost perpendicular

ledge, some fifty feet above me, was the pitiful figure of a man half hanging, half climbing up the ragged rock, a feat that seemed impossible even to me. I had him, and no mistake. I could have picked him off with the first shot; he stood no chance at all. I called to him and as he turned to look he almost fell. I stepped back some paces from the base of the sloping rock, so as to get a better range on him. But instead of stopping at the sound of my voice, he only made a greater effort to clamber up the faster. I didn't feel called upon to risk my neck in going after him, and just to show him that I meant business I called again and told him to come down. He continued upward, paying no attention to me whatever. Then I did what most of us would do, but I didn't want to hit him, I only tried to see how close I could come without striking his carcass. As the report of my gun broke the silence, I could see a small cloud of dust come out of the rock just above his shoulder, and a small fragment came tumbling down. Of course that settled it, and in every inch of his slow descent I could see that five hundred dollars coming to my hands inch by inch.

When he was ten feet from the ground his foot slipped, and he almost struck me as he fell. As I jumped where he lay he turned his eyes on me for the first time. Great big wide-open eyes that reminded me of a hunted hare. He was pale as a sickly girl, and now that his sombrero had fallen off I could see that he was not a Mexican at all. His clothes proclaimed poverty, and his small insignificant figure wouldn't have scared a flea. He didn't say a word, but started to cough. Such a cough I never heard before or since. Then before I could say anything, I saw the blood was on his lip, and as he coughed more came.

"My God!" I exclaimed, a world of sudden pity rising from my heart, "did my shot get you?"

He shook his head and tried to smile. The smile scared me; it was like the smile of a death's head, and it took no tall figuring to tell that death was written on his face. I stooped down and then, just as easy as if he had been a babe, set him, half reclining, up against the base of the rock.

"What can I do for you?" I asked, not knowing which way to turn. He mumbled something,—only a whisper. I leaned over him.

"Here it is," he gasped faintly, trying to reach the pocket of his coat. Then I did the one thing I feel most ashamed of. With a strange sensation of guilt, I searched the pocket and drew forth a great wad of bills. I was too ashamed to count them before him, his eyes, some way, had such an accusing look, but the amount proved to be the one I had started after. Then he keeled over, frightening me like a man that is haunted, and I stood away until I saw that he was still breathing. There was nothing that I could give him, and then I thought of water. Like a startled deer I started on the run down the trail, but it was some time before I struck a small stream which came gurgling down the mountain side. With my hat filled to the brim I ran panting back up the trail, afraid I would be too late.

When I finally reached him and bent over him, I thanked my stars that he was still breathing, while only a little time before I wouldn't have hesitated to plug him full of lead. It's all a matter of knowing who you're dealing with. After I had moistened his lips he was able to drink of the water, and at the end of half an hour could sit up. All the time I was working over him, I was thinking and puzzling my brain,

wondering why a puny little cuss like him had tackled such a desperate job a few nights before. Then he started to talk, but it was only between gasps and whispers that I got his story.

He had been in the West two years, kicked around and buffeted like a worthless mongrel. On account of ill-health he had been unable to hold any kind of a job, and oftentimes when he had a little money it had been difficult to obtain food and shelter; many people didn't want him around on account of his cough. Any fool could see that he was a "lunger." He had come from a little town back in New York state, where he had worked as a clerk up to the very last day he had come West. He had saved nothing, and the worst part of it was that he had a wife and two children, of three and five years, depending on him. He had done what he could, but when, a week before, his wife had written that she and the kids often went days without food, he just naturally grew desperate, and decided to get money at any cost. He held up the train, and made a neat job of it. He might have lived, I can't say as to that, but the chase I gave him would have been hard on any man; it was hard on me, and I felt it for many days after. Well, that's about all there is to it, so far as I'm concerned. As he sat there pale and panting for breath, I knew his time had come.

"Don't worry, kid," I said, as he turned those big eyes of his on me, "I'll see that the little woman gets enough to tide her along—"

"You don't mean to say—" he didn't finish, but he was looking at me wildly, with doubt in his eyes.

"Why not? There's a reward of five hundred put up for you, my boy, and I guess she can use it better than me."

His eyes shone for an instant with a new light, and fumbling in his pocket, he

drew forth a worn scrap of paper. "If you feel that way, here's her address," he whispered hoarsely.

"Kid," I said, with my voice trembling strangely, "you can depend on me," and I reached for his hand.

As I felt the icy coldness of his grasp, he tried to speak.

"What is it?" I asked, leaning closer.

"Don't tell her—"

"It's all right, old man, you can depend on me."

Then a faint smile came to his lips. "You're a gentleman," he gasped, "and I'm—glad—to have met you—"

He never finished all he tried to say, but he didn't need to. As the sun swung high over the mountain top, I could still feel the faint grasp of his cold hand. The end had come, but he died like a man.



Luke McLuke Says

BY J. SYME HASTINGS

Nothing else in the world gets out of date as rapidly as a woman's hat, an automobile and a bride.

The difference between courting and marriage is the difference between going to see a girl when you want to and having to see a girl when you don't want to.

Fashion is something that makes the corn-fed girls imagine they need bustles just because the thin girls are wearing them.

One reason for the high cost of living is the fact that the woman who used to make a ten-cent box of cornstarch keep her in face powder for six months, now pays a dollar for an ounce of imported complexion dope.

Ignorance is bliss. That's why a man's wife insists upon opening his mail when he isn't around.

Anyway, there is one excuse for the tight skirt. The girls have learned how to scratch their own matches.

Some men belong to everything but their own families.

Some women trust in Providence and others make sure that the window shades are pulled down.

Marriages may be made in Heaven, but the hammock is entitled to a little credit.

This is the season of the year when the girls buy white shoes and then look as though they were wearing the boxes.

The reason a girl wants to wear expensive silk stockings every day is because she knows that the men are not supposed to see them.

All things come to those who go after them.

Who said women lacked a sense of humor? Why, they want to be humored all the time.

A whole lot of the June brides who expected a 1913 model runabout are now busy operating a 1914 model washing machine.

Women are demanding equal rights. Why, if a man went down town wearing a peek-a-boo shirt and see-more pants he would get a ride in a patrol wagon.

Before he marries, a man never realizes that a day will come when he would rather hear his wife say "supper's ready," than hear her say "I love you."

Next to losing 50 pounds nothing pleases a fat woman so much as to meet a woman who is fatter than she is.

Burning your bridges behind you will sometimes help. But most people give away the baby buggy just because the first youngster has learned to walk.

We make a lot of fun of what women do, but you never saw a woman spending any money buying hair tonic from a bald-headed barber.

Modesty is only skirt deep.

There are two occasions on which a lot of women get a bunch of flowers and a ride—when they get married and when they die.

Anyway, the old-fashioned woman who had a placket in the rear of her dress, could get on a street car without tipping the world off as to how much she paid for her stockings.

When Wright Was Wrong

BY W. HANSON DURHAM

Do you believe in dreams? A lot of nonsense has been written on the subject, but we all of us have had startling experiences in connection with dreams and dismissed them with the matter-of-fact explanation of "merely a coincident."



HE breath of the blizzard seemed centered in Bolton, and as Wright turned the corner shiveringly, the full force of all its fury seemed to face him suddenly in one wild, white whirl of driving snow, which caused him to bow his head in confusion as he tried to breast the storm.

An arc light swung and swayed flickeringly overhead, and cast a cold purple haze half way down the little side street where Wright roomed, and with his benumbed hands thrust deep into his pockets, he plodded persistently along, scarcely able to lift his head sufficiently to scrutinize the long line of familiar fronts which faced him with that same monotonous similarity, each clad in its own confusing shroud of somber shadows, sifting snow and silence.

The clock in the tower of some nearby church struck the half hour after midnight, and then all was still again save for the gust of the blizzard and the rumble of a belated surface car crawling across the further end of the street beyond, and as it disappeared Wright lifted his head and stopped suddenly. He stood for a second and swiftly surveyed the familiar front that faced him, then with a sigh of satisfaction he strode up the snow-covered stone steps, and was about to draw forth his latch key, when he suddenly saw, with some surprise, that the door was al-

ready unlocked and stood slightly open.

Thinking that probably some of the tenants had thoughtlessly left the door open, Wright closed it carefully behind him as he stepped into the dark and deserted hall, and groping his way to the stairs, stumbled blindly up, grateful that he had at last reached shelter from the storm, and vaguely wondering if Marvin had got in yet.

Wright and Marvin were both on the staff of the *Sentinel*, and while Marvin was a day man and usually off duty at six, Wright was on the night shift and hardly ever was able to leave the office until after twelve, when the paper went to press, and he generally found Marvin either sound asleep when he came in or altogether absent.

Wright reached the top of the stairs, and still stumbling, groped about in the darkness until he found the door, and turning the knob noiselessly, he stepped into the room, gently closing the door behind him. Removing his coat and hat he tossed them carelessly aside, cautiously crossed the room to the gas jet at the head of the bed and began hopelessly hunting his pockets for a match, but not being a smoker, like Marvin, he failed to find one, and turning instinctively to the dresser beside him, began to feel and fumble about in the darkness, but only succeeded in toppling over something that fell to the floor with a sudden smash, then silence again reigned. He stepped back and sat down heavily upon the side of the bed.

"Why don't you ever buy any matches, Marvin?" he growled gruffly, as he slipped off his shoes one by one, and kicked them impatiently across the floor, but Marvin was silent, and wondering if he were really sleeping or shamming, Wright leaned over the bed, and by the little light which came in through the solitary window, he saw the size and shape of the familiar form there beneath the blankets, and reaching over he seized him by the shoulder and shook him vigorously.

"Say, old man, got a match?" he demanded desperately. "Why don't you leave a light burning when I'm out? What's the matter with you, anyway?" and again he shook the shoulder of the sleeping man roughly. A muffled moan as if in protest, was all the answer he got, and saying no more, Wright turned and began to undress in the darkness. With chattering teeth he crawled quickly in between the blankets beside him and was soon asleep.

When Wright woke up it was still dark and he lay for some time wide awake, listening to the wail of the wind about the window and trying in vain to sleep again. He heard the clock in the tower of the church strike two, and then he turned over and tried to count himself to sleep but that, too, was useless. He was now wide awake with no sign of sleep. He wondered if Marvin were still sleeping, and sat up and listened for his usual soft, serene snore, but all was still, and rising carefully upon his elbow he leaned cautiously over and listened, but there was no sound from the sleeping man beside him, so he leaned still closer and listened longer for some sign of sleep from him, but he could hear nothing but the same steady beat of his own heart, and no move or motion from Marvin, not even a bit of breath, and reaching carefully out, Wright felt cautiously

about in the darkness until his hand found and rested lightly upon the forehead of the man beside him. It was stone cold.

In sudden surprise Wright drew his hand quickly back and sat bolt upright in bed for a second, then hastily throwing aside the clothes he bent over and listened again for some sign or sound of life, but in vain. He was about to turn and spring from the bed to dress when his hand suddenly struck something wet and warm, and he leaped quickly to the floor and stood beside the window.

There in the subdued light he saw with surprise and horror, that his hand was red with blood.

For the space of a single second Wright simply stood and stared in senseless surprise, then like a flash his benumbed brain seemed to clear suddenly and for the first time he realized that Marvin was murdered. He turned tremblingly and began to hunt hurriedly about in the darkness for his clothes, and getting into them somehow, he was about to bolt barefooted for the door, when he stopped suddenly, then slowly turned and went back and stood beside the bed.

Marvin had been murdered! There was no doubt about that. He had evidently been dead for some time, but Wright knew that he was alive when he came in and spoke to him about the matches an hour or more ago. For some seconds Wright stood and faced the fact fairly, wondering what was best to do under the circumstances.

He realized that it was his duty to make the murder known at once, but also saw that if he did, the police would come and would probably hold him for the murder of Marvin. He knew that Marvin was dead. If there had been any doubt in his mind about that, he would not hesitate, but it would do no good to cause a commotion now; besides,

he wanted a chance to think a little before he made any move.

He went over and sat down beside the window, and unmindful of the chill in the air, he surveyed the situation which seemed serious enough to him now. Everyone in the house probably remembered that he and Marvin had a few hasty words in the hall that morning over some trifling matter, and he remembered that he had remarked that he would get even with Marvin somehow. All this came back to him now with strange vividness. Now that Marvin had been murdered, he would probably be held for it, and how could he prove his innocence?

The more he thought of it the more confused he became, and the more certain he was that the circumstances of the crime pointed plainly to him, and that he was powerless to help himself or hinder a possible conviction. At length, driven to desperation, as he plainly saw his own danger, he sought, like some wretched hunted animal, for some avenue of escape, but saw none—save in flight.

He was sure that no one saw him when he came in, and was equally sure that he could slip out as silently and unseen. He sprang suddenly to his feet, and groping blindly in the darkness, he succeeded in finding his shoes and slipping them on. He found his coat and hat and stepping to the door opened it easily, then with one backward glance over his shoulder at the stiffening shape there upon the bed, he stepped out into the hall, and silently closed the door.

Somehow Wright reached the top of the stairs and grasping the rail firmly, he crept cautiously down step by step, into the lower hall, quietly opened the outer door and passed out into the street and the storm.

He heard the clock in the tower of the church strike three as he plodded along

knee deep in the snow, and he stood for a second on the corner uncertain which way to go or what to do. He knew that he was safe for a few hours at least, but tomorrow he would be a hunted man with probably a price put upon him. Still dwelling on his own desperate danger, he hurried on again, plunging and plodding persistently through the untrodden snow.

Twice he stopped suddenly and slipped into some sheltered doorway where he stood in suspense while a patrolling policeman plodded along past. As soon as he was safely out of sight, Wright would venture forth and press on again.

Once he stopped short and suddenly as he saw the hopelessness of his haste. He was then tempted to turn about, retrace his steps and meet matters manfully, but somehow the situation seemed too serious for him to stand any chance; the circumstances all seemed particularly strong against him. He had known of certain cases where circumstantial evidence alone had convicted its man, so in desperation and dread of his own danger, he kept on, unconscious of everything, save that Marvin was murdered and that he must manage to make the most of what little time he had left.

Wright's first thought was to buy a ticket on the first train out of town, but he abandoned that plan as being foolhardy, for he was sure to be seen and followed. He had less than ten dollars in his pocket, hardly enough for an extended trip abroad, and he dared not strengthen suspicion against himself by borrowing even a small amount from any of his associates. He might perhaps, pawn his watch, but that would be folly too. In fact, flight in any direction would look strongly like guilt, and already he felt the chain of circumstantial evidence closing about him from every side.

What to do and where to go, puzzled

Wright. He could not return to his room where Marvin lay murdered. If he went back how would he account for the space of silence on his part between midnight and morning? While he was innocent of the crime itself, circumstances would go to show that he was not altogether ignorant of it. He saw now, for the first time, the mistake he had made in the folly of his frenzied flight, but it was now too late to conceal that fatal fact.

He could not return to his room, that was certain. Neither could he attract attention by attempting to leave the city for he was too well known to pass entirely unnoticed. He had two alternatives: either to go and give himself up peacefully, or to plod along in patience until some pursuing policeman picked him up. In fear and apprehension he glanced anxiously about, but saw no signs of life anywhere along the dark and deserted street.

For the next hour Wright walked wearily on. His one purpose was to keep in action, and if in his flight he failed to find freedom, it would at least keep him from freezing. Somehow, for another hour or more he managed to struggle steadily on through the still drifting snow which obliterated his footprints. Beaten and buffeted by the blizzard which hurled itself unmercifully upon him, his steps were beginning to lag and at times they faltered feebly, until at length, overcome by sheer exhaustion and exposure, Wright staggered a few steps further, then stopped suddenly and stood still for a second, leaning heavily against the cold stone of the building beside him, breathing hard.

A whirl of wind came sifting up the street, scattering the snow in a great cold cloud about him, and sweeping his hat from his head, where it lay unheeded in the snow at his feet. Wright was weary, and the cold stones against which

he leaned so heavily seemed no longer hard but strangely soft and restful. Another swirl of the blizzard swept past, piling the snow higher about him, but Wright no longer cringed or cared, for a delicious drowsiness, followed by a strange sense of welcomed warmth, was already beginning to steal over him, and he was rapidly growing indifferent alike to wind and weather when someone slapped him suddenly upon the shoulder, and he heard a voice which seemed far away and faint.

"Better brace up, old man, and beat it. The cop is coming."

Wright started, opened his eyes sleepily, and mumbled something unintelligible. He wanted the man to go away and let him alone, but somehow he seemed too sleepy to say so, and his head simply dropped again in silence.

"Here, old man!" cried the voice, coming closer. "This won't do. Come out of it. You'll freeze stiff if you go to sleep here. Better brace up and go home," and someone seemed to step up and shake him savagely by the shoulder.

A solitary policeman hove in sight around the corner, glanced suspiciously at Wright, as he stepped up and stood there in the snow before him.

"Drunk?" he demanded decidedly, and he flashed his light full upon him as he spoke. "If he's a friend of yours, you'd better hustle him home or I'll have to run him in. He'll freeze here, sure."

Wright heard him and tried to speak, but somehow he still seemed too sleepy to say anything; then he heard the man say suddenly:

"I'll get him home somehow, if I can find out who he is and where he lives."

The policeman nodded his head and said no more, but passed along. The stranger seized Wright roughly by the shoulder and shook him savagely.

"Say now, old man. Where do you live, anyway?"

Wright heard him and tried to tell him, but somehow his tongue still seemed too thick to talk; besides, he didn't care much anyway; he simply wanted to sleep.

"He'll freeze here, sure thing," the man muttered. "I'll take him around and poke him into bed, and let him sleep it off." As he spoke, he seized Wright by the arm and swung him abruptly about.

"Now old man," he commanded calmly, "march along!"

Reeling, and mumbling in protest, Wright was firmly forced along in spite of all his overwhelming desire to stop and sleep. Several times he stopped short and almost sank into the snow, but each time he was forced to his feet again and pushed, poked and prodded mercilessly along.

Wright remembered that together they toiled and tumbled up a flight of stairs somewhere; that he was then stripped suddenly of his coat and clothes and buried beneath a burden of blankets in somebody's bed; that something hot was being forced between his chattering teeth, and then he slept.

It was nearly noon when Wright woke up and stared sleepily about him. The first face he saw was that of Marvin through a dense cloud of tobacco smoke. He started suddenly at the sight of him, and for a moment sat bolt upright in bed beneath the blankets and stared in surprise.

Marvin nodded and grinned good-naturedly, and laying aside his precious pipe, he rose slowly to his feet and approached the bed.

"Out rather late last night, eh, old man!" he remarked carelessly, and he winked wisely as he sat down on the side of the bed and crossed his long legs.

Wright stretched himself a little and yawned sleepily. Somehow his senses seemed strangely confused even yet. Marvin was murdered and that thing that sat there on the edge of the bed grinning at him must be his ghost, or else it was all a diabolical dream. He was just about to speak—to say something to make sure of his senses, when there was a sudden commotion, followed by the clattering of hoofs and the clang of a gong in the street outside.

"What's that?" demanded Wright, starting suddenly up and glancing guiltily about.

"Oh, the poor chap next door committed suicide sometime last night. Cut his throat in bed. Probably that is the police patrol," remarked Marvin indifferently.

Wright made no reply, but with one leap he was out of bed onto the floor, and calling for his clothes.

"I've got to hustle out and hunt up the particulars and get down to the office," he said simply, as he slipped on his shoes and began hunting for his hat.

"Nothing doing there," muttered Marvin meaningly. "You are too late. I tried to telephone as soon as they found the body, but the wire was down and I had to walk in with the report. That's how I happened to find you. You were all in, old man—freezing fast."

"Yes, I guess I was," sighed Wright shiveringly.



Healthy Belts

BY W. G. CLUGSTON

An ingenious fakir sells "health belts" to dead people and finds life easy. A repeat order from a satisfied customer nearly puts him out of business.



RUBBER SMITH made a luxurious living by selling electric healing belts to dead people.

Yes, by selling them to dead people. Rubber was so addicted to the habit of making money that he would lie awake at night until he had kicked every stitch of bed clothes on the floor, trying to think of a way to make more money. He was also so addicted to the habits of luxury and laziness that he wouldn't even cut his own whiskers with a modern safety razor lawn-mower to save fifteen cents, nor would he exert himself to the extent of manicuring his own toe nails when he could find a respectable looking lady chiropodist who would perform the task for him. And his plan of selling electric healing belts to dead people was simple, unique and very profitable.

A supply of cheap electric belts was procured at wholesale prices, which made them cost Rubber twelve and one-half cents each, delivered. With these in the bottom of his trunk, Rubber would go into a city, subscribe for all the daily papers, acquaint himself with the janitors and office boys of all the undertakers, and sometimes he would go so far as to buy a coroner a few drinks if the coroner seemed to be a man who would appreciate such favors.

From these sources—the daily papers, the janitors of the undertakers and the coroners—Rubber learned of every

death of any importance in the city where he might be operating.

This done, a twelve and one-half cent belt, together with full directions for its use, and a long list of testimonials which proved its marvelous healing powers, was neatly packed in a box and C.O.D'd to the address of the dead person for the small and insignificant sum of five dollars and fifty cents.

The theory upon which the system was operated was that the package would arrive at the home of the dead person before the corpse was removed, or while the sorrowing relatives were still discussing the good qualities and noble characteristics of the recently departed, and that some of these sorrowing relatives would "fork over" the five-fifty out of respect for the memory of the dead.

It was none of Rubber's business whether the sorrowing relatives shed bitter tears because the thing had not arrived sooner, or whether they paid so little attention to it as to allow it to become one of the liabilities of the estate. But he made it his business to see that they thought the belt had been ordered by the dead person some time before, and this was done by means of a little note which regretted the delay, and which guaranteed that the money would be refunded if it did not prove as represented.

And, in most cases, the system worked splendidly and profitably. Occasionally Rubber would receive one of his belts

back, marked "Refused," and whenever this happened he always cursed the stingy relatives who had no more regard for the deeds of their dead, and very often on such occasions he would think of the shallowness of the living, and of how soon man is forgotten when once the sod falls upon his face. But, in most cases, the belts were received and paid for, and Rubber's only uneasiness and anxiety came from the fact that he did not know just how the eyes of the law would view his new field of industry, should it by any chance be called to the attention of some young and inexperienced prosecutor, or some unsympathetic police magistrate who might be getting ready to make another election campaign.

However, as we stated above, business was always pretty good with Rubber, and the five-fiftys came in with such certain regularity that neither was he compelled to labor in the fields of his chin whiskers, nor was he forced to soil his hands with the dirt of his toe nails.

But one day an incident happened that brought despair to the heart of Rubber, and that caused this king of the electric healing belt industry more trouble and worry than have been experienced by many of the barons of legitimate industry who have yielded to the temptations of graft, and who have paid for their dishonesty by being exposed through the daily papers, and given long terms in the federal prisons.

Rubber had invaded a new field, having been drawn hither by the numerous deaths of its respectable citizens, and by the legitimate desire to see his business grow and prosper.

In this city, however, Rubber found that the coroners were not used to being treated by strangers and resented it, and worse than this, the undertakers, janitors and office boys, were such dead ones themselves that they couldn't have found

out the names and addresses of their employers' victims if they had been allowed to wait until the moss had filled up the lettering on the tombstones.

And so Rubber was forced to rely solely upon the information received from the daily papers. This was sufficient for operating purposes, but it gave him no way of personally verifying the reliability of his prospective customers. But obstacles have to be overcome in every business, and great gain often carries with it a great risk which only the brave and the resolute can successfully face.

The first day's shipment of belts in this new field included one to a Mrs. Frances E. Bellum, of Euclid Avenue. Afterwards, Rubber always thought that he had had a "hunch" about this name when he was packing the belt, but whether he did or not, this belt was sent along with the rest, and the next day he received a perfectly good five-fifty from Mrs. Frances E.

Now, it so happened, all to Rubber's undoing, that the Frances E. Bellum whose death was reported in the *Star*, was a very old and very respectable lady of color, whose residence was not on Euclid Avenue, and whose past and present addresses were wholly unknown to the express company and its highly efficient employees.

It also so happened that a very rich and very delicate widow by the name of Frances E. Bellum did live on Euclid Avenue, and the highly efficient employees of the said express company did know her present address, and from contact with her peevish nature, had a pretty good idea of what her future one would be. And so, to this Mrs. Frances E. Bellum the precious belt was very carefully and very quickly taken, as all express packages were in times so long since that the mind of the writer runneth to the contrary.

The said Frances E. Bellum, the one who was alive, and who was a widow and a delicate person, received the package, opened and examined it, read from the yellow testimonial slip of the marvelous cures it would effect, and in the despair of her physical condition, she paid the five-fifty, and proceeded at once to harness herself with the belt, somewhat after the fashion that a city school-teacher would try to harness a plow mule with a pair of chain traces and a cotton back-band.

The remarkable part about the whole affair was that Mrs. Frances E. began to get better of all her maladies immediately, and her physicians were unable to persuade her any longer that their daily calls and doses of bread pills were necessary to keep her from surrendering her body to the worms of the earth, and her soul to the angels of Heaven.

Mrs. Frances E. ate and slept, and enjoyed life as she never had before, and she considered the mysterious arrival of the magic belt as nothing short of an act of Providence, done, all in this strange and mysterious manner, for the sake of her own physical comfort and the discomfort of her attending physicians.

But all of these things would not have troubled Rubber, and he would have felt no such animosity towards detectives or dread of the vengeance of the law if he had not been so money-mad, and if he had been honest enough to put better quality into the making of his wares.

After wearing the belt for a few days, Mrs. Frances E. discovered that it was gradually returning to the elements from which it was made, and in a short time the precious thing dropped to pieces entirely. If Rubber had known, he might have told her that a twelve and one-half cent belt would not harness the health of a wealthy widow for very long at a

time, and he might have left her enough belts to do her the rest of her natural lifetime; but Rubber did not know, and consequently he was not to blame—either for the belt dropping to pieces, or for the return to Mrs. Frances E. of all of her pain and suffering and delicate health.

In a short time the poor woman became almost distracted over the loss of the belt, and her malady became worse than it ever had been. She searched in vain for the name of the manufacturers of the belt, or for some clue as to the place from which it had come. She ordered every kind of electric belt she could find in that and neighboring cities. But none of them were like the one she had worn, and none of them did her any good. Her doctors could give her no relief, and she endured the agonies of a thousand deaths every hour of the day.

At last, when she had endured and suffered all that her frail body could stand, and when death, poverty or anything, would be better than her present state, she decided that she must have another electric belt like the first one, even if it cost her every cent of her large fortune.

A private detective was sent for. He was shown the remaining fragment of the great belt, was given the meager details of how it came to Mrs. Bellum's possession, and was instructed to find a duplicate of it at any cost or hazard.

The young detective, who considered himself equal to the occasion of producing the originator of electricity itself if necessary, took the case, and set about his task at once, *a la* Sherlock Burns, Scotland Yards.

During all of this time, Rubber had remained in the city, and had continued to do a thriving business. As the undertaker, the florist and the minister prospered, so did Rubber prosper. People were dying in a manner after his own

big heart, and the reverence and respect of the living for their dead made him feel that humanity was not so bad after all, and that there was still a certain reverence for the dead and a respect for their struggles in life.

The first move of the detective was to visit the express offices. There he found a record of the package that had been received by Mrs. Frances E., and he also found that it had been sent by one R. K. Smith, Distributing Agent.

"Ah, good!" thought the detective. "Now to find R. K. Smith, Distributing Agent, secure the belt, take a little trip to Chicago on the Madame, return and tell her what a hard time I have had, and it is done."

After much diligent search, the detective found that one R. K. Smith lived in a flat on Chestnut street and another had rooms at a secluded hotel. Of all the Smiths of every part of the city, these were the only two with the initials R. K., so this made it all the more of a "lead pipe" for the detective.

An interview with the R. K. who lived on Chestnut street developed the fact that he was a floor walker in a glue factory, and that he wouldn't know an electric healing belt from an electric asparagus shredder. So the other R. K. must be the distributing agent.

At the hotel, the detective waited long and patiently to see his man; but Mr. Smith seemed disinclined to see visitors in his room, even on the most important business. However, the detective took his station near Mr. Smith's door, and when the latter came out some hours later, the detective cornered him.

"Are you not Mr. R. K. Smith?" asked the detective, extending his hand.

Rubber nodded affirmatively, and eyed his man with all the analysis of his nature.

"And are you not the distributing agent for a certain kind of electric

healing belt?" asked the detective.

"No; I am a salesman for the International Rubber Company of Evansville, Indiana," returned Rubber, rather nervously, and with this he hurried on down the hall without waiting for further developments.

The detective was not satisfied with his interview, and, as we all know, detectives are never baffled by such methods. So the detective shadowed Rubber, who, after turning many corners and crossing many streets, entered an express office. As soon as Rubber came out of the office the detective went in. His suspicions were verified. The man he had been shadowing had just received several collections, and had called for a package that had been left at the office a short time before for delivery.

The detective hurried back to the hotel, confident that his case would soon be completed and the goods procured. But, upon his arrival at the hotel, he was informed that Mr. Smith had just left, and that he had given up his rooms and checked out.

However, this was not defeat to the detective. It was only delay, which is a part of the game of detecting, and sometimes is a part of the finding of a man who sells electric belts to dead people. The search that followed was long and tedious, and poor Mrs. Frances E. was almost dead with suffering. But at last she received a telegram stating that the distributing agent had been located in a distant city, and that the belt would be procured at once. This sustained the poor woman in her suffering, and kept hope alive in her frail body.

This time, however, the detective determined to make sure, and he thought that it might be better to try to secure one of the belts without a personal interview with Mr. Smith. At an express office he found the names and addresses of two persons to whom Rubber had

sent packages. He would interview these parties, and probably get one of them to order a belt for him.

That afternoon the work was taken up. At the first place, the detective found a funeral in progress, and he was somewhat surprised to find that it was the funeral of the man whom he sought. He made no inquiry, but hurried on to the other address as it was getting late, and he wanted to finish the day's work.

At the other address, he was at the door by a big solemn-looking man, and when he gave the name of the person whom he wished to see, the man opened the door, took his hat, and led him down a narrow hall. Then the man pointed to a door, and turned and left him. The detective entered the room, and there was nothing in it except a corpse. A few candles were burning at the head of the casket, but there was not a living soul in the room except himself. The detective walked easily over to the coffin, peeped in, then hurriedly left the room. As he walked down the hall, he saw no sign of the man who had shown him in, and he felt like a fool and looked like something else.

When he had sneaked quietly out of the house, he decided that he would abandon this method, and he began to wonder what connection there was between buying an electric healing belt and dying almost at the same time. His detective instinct set his mind to working as to the probability of these men having met some foul and mysterious death at the hands of this mysterious distributing agent, but he knew that the men had been dead more than a few hours, and he was not sure that the packages had been delivered to them from the express office.

However, as we have said above, for the good of the country, and the safety and protection of our citizens and our valuables, we must remember that de-

tectives are not to be baffled, and that this man was no traitor to his profession. He would see this distributing agent, and he would have one of his belts at any cost. And getting one of the belts was the only thing that he was being paid for by Mrs. Frances E.

When Rubber returned to his room the next afternoon, he bolted the door, placed a pile of papers on his table and and sat down, at peace with the world and bearing malice in his heart towards no living man. He would have probably dropped off into a peaceful, quiet nap, or he might have devoted an idle half hour to the entries at Juarez, but just as he was getting settled in his chair, and getting his feet properly placed on the table, the door of his closet opened quietly and the detective covered him with a gun.

When Rubber looked around, he was too terror-stricken to move and too astonished to speak. Visions of striped clothes, a bald head, and windows that were man-screened, passed through his mind in rapid march. The detective showed his badge of authority, advanced, and again asked Rubber if he were not distributing agent for a certain electric healing belt.

Rubber would have again denied his occupation, and would probably have tried to make a lightning connection with a rubber goods house in some distant city, but he realized that the detective had been in the room during his absence and had probably searched his trunk.

"Yes, sir," he answered nervously; "I have the agency for a belt that is claimed to benefit people when nothing else can help. I carry a few of them with me, but I rarely ever sell one."

The detective stopped him. "Well, I don't care how many of them you sell, or anything about it, but a lady by the name of Mrs. Frances E. Bellum bought one of them from you, and she says that

she will die unless she procures another one. What do you ask for them?"

Rubber was again almost beyond speaking, but he appeared as indifferent as he could and answered:

"Well, about twenty-five cents."

"Give me five dollars' worth of them," growled the detective. "I have chased you half way across the continent trying to get one for the old lady, and I ain't hankering for another such fool job."

Rubber gave the detective every belt he had in his room, every guarantee slip and every testimonial. The detective took them and walked out, and he had hardly reached the street when a squad from the local force came up and put Rubber under arrest.

Rubber was charged with the crime of his occupation, but he denied all to the very last. His room and belongings were searched, but no evidence was found and he was turned loose. The whole affair left him in a perpetual dread of the law and all of its officers. However, being a progressive business man, Rubber learned a lesson from it, and now he has a *bona fide* forged order for every electric healing belt that he sends out. Also, he has a longing for the one honest, living testimonial that he could probably get from Mrs. Frances E. Bellum, if he only had the nerve to ask for it. But Rubber lacks nerve because selling electric healing belts to dead people does not require it.



Three Ways Out

BY EDWIN BAIRD

Things are never as bad as they appear. If you don't believe this old truism read this story of a banker who broke faith and looked down the muzzle of a ten shot automatic.



THIS fascination was horrible. Oilily clean, evilly trim, it lay on the glass cover of the study desk—an automatic revolver advertised to “shoot ten

times quick.”

Sam Carlock, president of the Carlock Trust Company, had just uncased it; and he sat now at the desk, head resting on his spread fingers, gazing at it stonily. At his elbow was the remainder of a Scotch highball, and a nearby ashtray was heaped with cigarette stumps. A pile of unopened letters sprawled diagonally athwart the desk, where they had been shoved hastily. The room was deathly still.

Presently he sat back and picked up the revolver. The blue steel gleamed in the electric light; the nickled parts glistened wickedly. He saw his hand tremble, and thrust it under the shaded desk lamp. The trembling did not abate. The revolver clattered noisily upon the heavy glass.

“Hell! What a rank coward!”

Hearing his voice, he laughed mirthlessly aloud. “I’m getting the willies,” he muttered, and rose and took a turn about the study, pausing once to select a cigarette and again to light it. After a minute, revolver in hand, he walked to a mirror in the adjoining bedroom.

Standing before the mirror, face contorted against the acrid smoke curling from his cigarette, he glanced at the

round black muzzle of the revolver—whence Death could issue “ten times quick”—then placed the muzzle against his right temple. Palm, thumb and three fingers gripped the handle grimly; his right forefinger tightened upon the trigger—

“Sam!”

He wheeled violently, involuntarily shoving the weapon in a pocket of his sack coat. His wife, superb in a Worth opera gown of pale green and white, stood on the threshold of the corridor door. For a space neither spoke, though each surmised accurately what the other thought.

“It’s nearly eight, Sam, and you’re not dressed. We shall be late.” Her carefully-modulated voice expressed only surprise.

“No opera for us tonight, Edith,” he said. “I—oh, drop that pose! You know I can see through it. Now come in and close the door, and we’ll talk things over.”

She drew her level black brows together, and a satiny line of annoyance rippled the rose-leaf skin near her mouth. She was an unusually pretty woman, dark, slim, full of fire.

She entered, closed the door behind her and remained standing, one white, bejewelled hand on the glass knob.

“Sit down, Edith.” And as she complied: “You saw the—revolver?”

“Sam—Sam!”

“You drove me to it,” he cried, and suddenly buried his face in his hands.

"Your damned extravagance, your eternal climbing—I couldn't keep up, that's all."

There was a pause. Finally:

"How much—did you take, Sam?"

"Roughly, a quarter of a million. We've been living on it for the past year. Your trips to Europe, that gown you wear, your dinner tonight—all were bought with other people's money. Tomorrow or the next day they'll find me out." He lifted his bowed head, and she saw his face was pale, almost ghastly. "And it'll be Joliet for me when they do, for that piratical crew will have no mercy."

Rising, he walked into the study and returned with a fresh highball. His wife had not moved from the huge leather chair, which almost submerged her. Her level dark eyes regarded him calmly, even coldly, as she supported her dainty chin on two slim, beautiful fingers.

"You mustn't be found out," she said. "You understand that?"

With a savage movement, he snapped the beads of perspiration from his forehead and lighted a cigarette. Smoking furiously, chewing the straw tip to a pulp, sipping his highball, he strode back and forth in the warm, softly-lighted room. Suddenly he confronted her.

"Do you know what that means?" he demanded. "It means everything will have to go. I'll be ruined—wiped out. There won't be enough left to clothe a flea."

She looked up swiftly. "You mean if you pay back—"

"Exactly," he nodded. "If I pay back what I stole. It's either that or state's prison."

"There must be another way out." Her cold eyes narrowed upon him. "There is another way!"

He stirred his highball slowly, avoiding her gaze.

"Yes," he said, "there is."

"Well?"

"Grogan."

"What's Grogan?" But she knew well enough, and he knew that she knew. Everybody in Chicago knew Grogan—Timothy Grogan, the "Garbage Man," whose career began as a scavenger and reached its apex as the buidler of a mammoth reduction plant, whose political machinations were as unsavory as the commodity which made him famous. And who had thrice been a visitor at the Carlock's home.

"Grogan," said Carlock, "has offered to save me. Damn him!"

"His price?" she asked.

He tinkled the ice cube against the glass in his hand, and his face grew dully red. "The snake! I should have knocked him down when he named it."

"What does he want?" Her voice was colder.

"He wants"—Carlock licked his lips—"he wants—Gladys."

Mrs. Carlock recoiled; her hand, a-glitter with diamonds, fluttering out before her as if to ward off a blow.

"Oh! How can you repeat it? It's—it's heinous!"

He nodded; his teeth sunken in his lip until the skin whitened.

"I know. He has daughters as old as Gladys. His son, Robert, is even older—"

She scarcely heard. Her weak, pretty mouth quivered piteously. She was thinking of the marriage she had planned for Gladys, of the stride it would have taken toward the triumph she craved. The match, for some reason, had missed fire. Gladys was rather uncertain, rather inclined to reflect the lowly origin of her parentage. Perhaps that was why.

And then, vividly, bitterly, the woman thought of her incessant striving for social recognition; she recalled the early

struggle for a foothold, remembered how she and Sam had fought mediocrity shoulder to shoulder. Sam worked hard, and they attained decent means; but, still unsatisfied, she spurred him on, until, by degrees, they touched elbows with affluence. And always her struggle for place went tirelessly on, handicapped by lack of family, though aided by cash. The thought that her efforts had gone for naught infuriated her.

She looked at him whom she held responsible. Her eyes flashed wrathfully.

"You thief!" were the words that leaped to her tongue; but she uttered no sound. Instead, she rose quietly and walked to the door.

"Where are you going, Edith?"

"To the opera." She glanced at the clock. "I shall be very late. I shall also have to make apologies for you."

He gaped at her, his lower jaw sagging so that deep lines extended from nose to mouth. "By Jove, you're an icy proposition! What about this—this other thing?"

"Perhaps you can settle that best—alone." And, almost imperceptibly, her eyes rested on the coat pocket where she had seen him put the revolver. Then, with no further word, she went out and closed the door noiselessly behind her.

He went to the study, mixed another highball, picked up the glass and agitated the contents with the long-handled spoon. After several moments of deep thought he put the glass down, untouched, and took the revolver from his pocket. Memory of a recent newspaper item about the half million dollar life insurance he carried recurred to him. The item was true. He was shaking violently now. His nerve had gone to pieces. He gripped the revolver firmly in both hands, glanced stealthily over his shoulder before placing the small black hole—from which Death could issue "ten times quick"—against his breast, in the

region of his heart. He crooked his right thumb upon the trigger.

"May God forgive me!" he breathed.

A tap on the door. He opened it, and the butler extended a salver on which was Timothy Grogan's card. He tore the card in two and flung it into the waste basket.

"Get him out! Tell him anything—only get him out of this house!" He raised his voice angrily, and the revolver, which he had forgotten, was held at his side in a way that appeared menacing.

The servant fled, and so precipitately that he bumped into Grogan, ascending the staircase. Faultlessly attired in evening clothes, tall, blond, and well turned out by an English valet, Grogan would have passed for a gentleman anywhere—until he opened his mouth. His speech betrayed him.

"Howdy ye do, Caarloek, me b'y?" He came breezily into the study, equally oblivious to the revolver in Caarloek's hand, the latter's coldness, and the butler's evident perturbation.

Caarloek scowled and said nothing. Remembering the revolver, he replaced it in his pocket. Grogan turned and deliberately closed the door in the butler's face. Then he made himself comfortable on a wide divan, took a gold cigar case from his hip pocket and offered it to his host, who declined. Lighting one of the cigars, he leaned back and crossed his legs.

"I remaark, Caarloek, me lad," he said casually, "that ye're contemplatin' sooycide." And before Caarloek could more than gasp at the audacity: "Shame upon ye! 'Tis a coward's way out."

"It's ten thousand times more preferable," flared Caarloek, beside himself with rage, "than your way out."

Grogan smiled easily in a cloud of fragrant smoke. Grogan smoked good cigars.

"Ye will have yer joke, me b'y, I know,

but I'm here to talk sense wid ye, so nix on th' play-actin'—"

"Get out of this house!" roared Carlock, and advanced threateningly. Grogan made no move. "You won't go? We'll see." He jerked the revolver from his pocket. Grogan made no move.

Then a young girl's voice was heard in the hall below, and Gladys Carlock, radiantly lovely in a smart street dress, swept into the room, oval cheeks glowing from the frosty outdoors. Her fine eyes embraced the two men in a swift glance of understanding; but, like her mother, she knew how to mask her thoughts.

"Good evening, Mr. Grogan. Father, where's mother?"

"Gone to the opera."

"Then you shall hear the news first."

She stepped quickly to her father, flung her arms about his neck, whispered in his ear. Her fresh, girlish face had grown suddenly crimson.

Carlock's shoulders drooped, as he removed her arms and held her from him.

"Married!" he gasped. "To whom?"

She slipped from his hands, hastened toward the door. Her eye caught Grogan's, devouring her voluptuously.

"To somebody," she said over her shoulder, "of whom Mr. Grogan is fond."

At the door she called to some person awaiting her summons. A slender, blond young man entered, and, unashamed, placed his arm around her pliant waist.

Grogan leaped to his feet.

"Bobby!" And he stared speechlessly at his son, embracing the beautiful young creature beloved by both. After a space, he sank back upon the divan and turned to Carlock, hands outspread, palms up. "I say, Carlock—give us a swing at that corn juice, will ye, now?"

Carlock regarded him austere; but the old Irishman's expression of helpless defeat was too much for a normal sense of humor. Carlock smiled, as he rang the servant's bell.

"I'll drink with you, Grogan," said he, "but it'll be wine—not whiskey."



In Hell Hole Swamp

BY OCTAVUS ROY COHEN

Through a dark, malarial, snake-infested swamp at night, the father of a murdered child and a sheriff pursue relentlessly the guilty negro, one intent upon murder, the other upon capture,—the arm of vengeance versus the arm of the law.



HE croaking of a thousand frogs told of the coming of night in Hell Hole swamp, and a lone owl hooted sadly from the topmost branches of a stunted pine. From every tree the long, gray moss drooped disconsolately, hanging in great, cloudlike bunches from the barren branches; the water lilies floated, motionless, in a putrid mass of green slime. Small, vicious mosquitoes droned in swarms which were visible to the naked eye, even in the failing light, as they swirled and eddied in living currents of tantalizing monotone. A huge water moccasin uncoiled and slid silently into the stagnant water from the root of a decayed stump.

From afar there came the sloshing splash of water—it grew louder; a negro dashed through the barren undergrowth, ploughed through the slime and threw himself wearily on the root which had been occupied by the snake a few minutes previously.

The man was short and stocky; his huge corded muscles stood out in bold relief from his glistening flesh; his tremendous clawlike hands opened and closed convulsively; and he breathed in short, whistling, labored gasps, his right hand resting for a moment on his heaving chest. His clothes were in rags; the remains of a single suspender holding the torn trousers in place. He wore neither shoes nor stockings, and his legs

and feet were trickling blood from a number of tiny, ugly wounds.

His face was distorted with terror as he stood motionless and listened intently; and then, satisfied, lay back against the stump. His eyes, wild with fear, roved restlessly, peering through the swiftly gathering gloom. Through the moss bunches above, the rays of the setting sun made a valiant effort to force their way, and the little glen looked like a cave interior. A frog, perched on a root, watched the negro attentively for a few seconds, croaked defiantly, and disappeared; once more the owl hooted, and the man leaped to his feet in terror, then, recognizing the sound, he sank again to the ground, his tense muscles relaxing; but in his eyes there remained the awful look of the hunted animal.

Before the sheriff's office an excited crowd had gathered: motley and eager, armed for the man hunt. The best and the worst were there, armed alike, all prompted by one motive, each intent on the same end. In the doorway stood the sheriff, gun in hand. His olive-drab shirt was open at the collar, disclosing a bull-like neck, corded thickly with muscle; two revolvers swung easily at his belt, while in a hip pocket an ugly clasp knife rested in a fanciful leather sheath. He wore high hunting boots; his felt hat was pulled well down over his forehead; a huge canteen of water hung by a strap from his shoulder; a small knapsack was fastened securely to

his broad back; and the pockets of his shirt were filled with buckshot shells. He was speaking, forcing attention with his resonant voice and steely eyes, as he faced the group before him.

"You fellows better get back home. I'm a-goin' after this nigger alone, an' I'll git him if it takes ten years."

The crowd murmured, but softly; for it knew the sheriff.

"He's yonder in Hell Hole," volunteered one. "It's foolish to go alone."

"I've done it before, an' I know the swamp as well as him. An' you-all ain't a-comin' 'cause there ain't a-goin' to be no lynchin'."

"Lynching," said one, "is too good."

"I agree with you, brother." The sheriff singled out the speaker with his eye. "But this yere nigger comes back with me, an' he gits a fair tri'l."

The primitive instinct of the mob was uppermost; the men talked among themselves.

"He'll get no fair tri'l in this yere town, She'iff," said the spokesman. "Thet nigger'll hang time he sets foot yere."

"No, boys." The sheriff talked as he would have spoken to children. "The nigger's comin' back with me—an' you ain't a-goin' to lynch him."

A horse, foam-flecked and weary, rattled through the village, raising a blinding dust-cloud as it clattered through the dry sand. Its rider pulled up sharply at the door of the sheriff's office and leaped lightly from the saddle, throwing the reins to a lanky negro, who, with distended eyes, stood, fascinated, listening to the talk of the infuriated men. Tall, and ungainly of figure, the newcomer forced instant attention. His was the rugged face of the Carolina farmer, set with iron determination and unappeasable anger, and his beady eyes sparkled a menace from beneath the black, bushy brows. A revolver peeped

forth from his hip; in his right hand he carried an automatic shotgun. The crowd recognized him, and made way. He faced the sheriff, eyes blazing.

"Whar you goin'?" he demanded hoarsely.

"After that—nigger." The sheriff was calm.

"You stay here," threateningly; "he's my man."

"I'm a-goin', I said; an' I don't need no help."

"I ain't offerin' of no help. I'm a-goin' to kill that beast, an' I won't stand no she'iff buttin' in, neither!"

The sheriff smiled grimly. "I'm goin'," he said simply.

"Better not!" The man had advanced as he spoke, and now faced the sheriff squarely. Their eyes met unwaveringly, in a clash of indomitable wills.

"Why?"

"He—he was—my—li'l boy, She'iff;" the voice of the big farmer broke, and he finished fiercely, as though ashamed of his feeling, "an' I'll kill that—or he'll git me; one."

"You can't come with me."

"I ain't a-reckoned on goin' with you. I'm goin' now an' I'm goin' alone; an' I give you fair warnin', She'iff, don't you interfere!"

He turned on his heel and strode rapidly away, first gruffly ordering the lanky negro to stable his tired horse.

Silently the crowd watched his progress down the street, as he swung along swiftly, looking neither to the right nor left, and a hum of speculation started.

"That's the pore kid's daddy," volunteered one to a travelling man. "The little feller was murdered, an' they've gone into Hell Hole swamp after the nigger. They'll git him, too."

Ten minutes later, the sheriff, alone, disappeared into the swamp.

For a long, long time, the negro re-

mained on his mouldy seat listening, and occasionally he wiped the beads of sweat from his fevered forehead. He unsheathed a long, dangerous-looking knife and gingerly tested the razor-edge blade, his bloodshot eyes gleaming devilishly. Once he drew it gently across the ball of his thumb, and cursed softly when the keen edge made a fine incision; then he looked dumbly, half-frightened, at the thin stream of blood, and washed his thumb in the slimy water. From his hip pocket he produced a bottle of moonshine whiskey, and drank deeply, grunting like an animal as he lay back, temporarily content and bereft of fear.

But the horror of the chase grew in him once again, and he arose restlessly, for he knew the caliber of the two men who were his inevitable pursuers, and he shuddered as he thought of their reputation as swamp rangers; he knew that these two only, of all the white men in two counties, knew every pitfall and deathbog in Hell Hole swamp.

With the unreasoning fear of the pursued he wanted to run, run; whither, he knew not, but his instinct carried him farther and farther through the gloom into the center of the droning, croaking, hooting terror of darkness.

Night settled noiselessly, like a huge mantle, over Hell Hole swamp, and dread filled the fugitive's heart. His terror was more unreasoning than before, for, in the manner of his kind, he feared the darkness: feared it with a deep, unreasoning dread, an inherent terror. He could not recognize the night as his ally, and he stumbled on and on, splashing through the water, slipping constantly, stopping every few seconds to listen, his eyes gleaming unnaturally the while.

He cursed as he crashed and splashed his way in a huge circle. He cursed because he was afraid, and then because he continually stumbled and fell, for the

night was dark; the negro could not see the moon, and the stars which studded the heavens were invisible above the impenetrable mantle of gray moss. He cursed that moss; it was typical of the swamp, and he knew it, but it shut out the light. His legs bled profusely where the cruel leafless undergrowth slashed at him.

Swarms of malarial mosquitoes lighted on his face, his neck, his arms, whenever he paused to rest, and he slapped at them fearfully. With every few steps he jumped, for he knew that snakes, poisonous snakes, abounded, and he was in mortal terror of their scarlet fangs. Once he stepped on a slimy, partially disintegrated root which lay imbedded in the muck under the surface of the greenish water, and he screamed in sudden terror as through his mind there flashed a picture of a horse which had once been killed under him, struck by a tiny rattler.

Onward he stumbled, quaffing from the whiskey flask in his pocket. Then terror of the darkness overcame his fear of detection, and he cut and lighted a pine-knot torch, holding it high above his head, illuminating the swamp clearly within the radius of a few feet; the tall pines and grayish, leafless swamp oaks rose in the awesome grandeur of fathomless silhouette from a bed of thick, ill-smelling water and scrub undergrowth. He glanced into the water, and then looked away with a vague, nameless fear gnawing at his vitals, for the sight of his mirrored terror accentuated his awful fear. Beyond the narrow circle of light he could see nothing; the torch in his hand only served to make the blackness more dense. Muttering imprecations and mouthing scraps of prayer, talking incoherently to himself, he crouched low and waded on, swinging through the shallow water with a long, low, apish stride, holding the torch

above him. He discerned the splash of pursuing feet, and halted, every nerve strained.

A revolver cracked sharply a short distance away; the bullet spanked into the trunk of a tree not three feet from his head!

The nerveless fingers spasmodically released their hold on the blazing torch, and it plunged into the water, where its flame died with a hopeless, sizzling gurgle.

The negro ran swiftly, with long, splashing, shuffling, sliding strides. At the corners of his mouth tiny flecks of foam appeared.

The sheriff turned into the swamp near the railroad track which marked one of the boundaries of the town. He knew the inherent cunning of his quarry, and he went prepared for any emergency. For years he had hunted man and beast through this swamp, and he knew it foot by foot; in the state of South Carolina there was no other swamp as dangerous, and in the state there was no other man so thoroughly competent to hold the office of official manhunter for the trackless waste.

His muscular right hand clutched the shotgun tightly; the left rested easily and naturally on the butt of a heavy revolver. He planned a strategic campaign: the fugitive, he figured, would go straight to the center of the swamp, and then lose himself in a wild, objectless attempt to fool his pursuers. The sheriff knew that no man could pick a path through that infested fastness at night; and he walked slowly and almost noiselessly, choosing his footings with care, ready for instant action, intent on capture, as through the fever-laden wastes he followed the blazed path of Duty.

He made little of the lone, dangerous chase through the swamp; in his makeup there were none of the white corpuscles

which make for heroics. He had served his county faithfully and fearlessly for fifteen years, and duty to him was second nature.

Darkness settled like a pall over the swamp. The sheriff halted prudently and ate sparingly of the light store of lunch which he carried in the knapsack. Then he struck a match, carefully housing the flame in the cup of his big palms, and measured out a dose of quinine and whiskey to ward off the malaria. The mosquitoes swarmed about him, and brushing them off impatiently, he started on again indefatigably. Once he thought of turning back and restarting his hunt in the morning, but there flashed through his agile mind a picture of the dramatic scene before the door of his office, and he set his teeth hard and ploughed on, determined to prevent a second murder.

Minutes passed—hours. On and on he waded through the muck and mire, the succulent ooze closing tenaciously about his feet and seeping insistently through the eyelets of his hunting boots. His hands were bleeding slightly, and his trousers were torn; but the terror of the swamp did not strike him for he was filled with the exultation of the hunter. He paused, and the muscles of his hand hardened in visible ridges as the fingers closed automatically about the stock. Far off through the night he saw the blazing of a pine torch, and, knowing the nature of the man he was pursuing, he understood.

"I'll crease 'im," he muttered, and advanced cautiously.

He shifted the shotgun to his left hand, and in his right he nursed the larger of the two revolvers—a huge six-chambered .44. His sharp eyes pierced the darkness of the immediate vicinity, and he crept softly ahead, avoiding stumps and yawning holes of quickmud with marvelous cunning.

He drew closer to the negro, and

squatted down, muscles tensed, behind a decayed mass of slimy, giant roots; resting his revolver butt on a crotch, he aimed carefully.

His shotgun, placed carelessly against a stump, slipped, tottered, and fell splashing into the water. The sheriff waited, breathless, but the negro had heard; his closely cropped head flew upward, and the hand which held the torch dropped swiftly. The revolver spoke, cracking sharply in the awesome stillness of the night, and the torch dropped into the water: sizzled, spluttered, and went out in a little cloud of pungent steam.

"Got 'im," grated the sheriff exultingly.

Then there came to his ears the regular splash, splash, of the man's running steps as he dashed away, unhurt, and occasionally he heard a stream of poorly muffled oaths as the hunted man stumbled and fell.

Vengeance and Duty allied, relentlessly pursued Life through the grimness of the night. Burning with blood-lust, thrilled with the primitive passion of the man-hunt, and writhing in impotent rage at the thought of his murdered son, his only child, the father entered the swamp, blind to all dangers, and intent on one object. The negro fled, terror-stricken, fear paramount; his every move prompted by the inborn love of life; except in a vague way the cause of it all was forgotten; the three men lived in the present, the subjects of their emotions, believing the end worthy of the means and of themselves.

The father entered the swamp at the far side after a rapid detour. The mental process was simple: it was natural to suppose that the negro would make for the haven held out to him by the other side. That the quarry would harbour the thought of voluntarily spending

the night in the swamp the father knew to be extremely unlikely, for he was well aware of the deep-rooted terror of all negroes for the night with its unnamable, invisible and unknown dangers. He had heard of fugitive negroes living in the other swamps of the state for days and days, existing on berries; but no one lived in Hell Hole.

He advanced noiselessly. Around him thousands of frogs raised their raucous voices in grating unison to the canopy of drooping gray moss overhead, and the tiny insects of the night droned away in a curdling singsong of discord. Occasionally the hoot of an owl broke the oppressive sameness of sound.

Sharp and loud, there came to his ears the sound of a shot. He paused abruptly, and listened. The crack had been distinct and he knew that it had been caused by a heavy-calibred revolver. He gripped his gun more firmly and waited; evidently the shot had been fired at a distance greater than a quarter of a mile.

He heard the splashing of running feet; once the runner fell, and the father exultingly listened to the stream of vile profanity, as he recognized the negro's voice.

Bringing the shotgun to his shoulder, he calmly awaited the coming of his victim, the grim smile of the voluntary executioner distorting his iron features. The splashing drew nearer; the water in the little glade at his feet ruffled. Reverberating like thunder, the automatic spoke once, twice—seven times; echoing awesomely through the quietude of the forest marsh.

From the black throat there came a wild yell of terror; then, for a second, all was still—

As the sheriff's bullet struck the stump, the negro dashed madly away

through the swamp, straight toward the side from which he had entered. He ran by instinct, unreasoningly, filled with a mad desire to escape a known danger, and he plunged unthinkingly into the unknown. Hundreds of yards he ran, stirring the slimy water into an unwilling foam, then pausing to listen. The steps of his pursuer came relentlessly nearer, directly behind.

His countenance seamed with terror unutterable, he gasped painfully, clutching spasmodically at his heaving chest with both huge, horned hands. Once he dashed full into a jagged tree stump, and he cursed loudly as he recoiled from the impact, but staggered on, his face streaming with blood, his skin horribly torn by the undergrowth. The night exacted its toll, and his bloodshot eyes strove ineffectually to pierce the gloom.

Suddenly, before him, there came a flash and a deafening roar, while in the trees behind a rain of buckshot scattered. He felt a slight, stinging pain in his shoulder, and instinctively he dropped like a log and lay motionless. The gun spoke again and again, spitting forth its leaden messengers of death, then the shooting stopped, and he dashed back whence he had come, forgetting for the moment the existence of the man who had first fired.

Knowing that he had missed, cursing himself for not having shot to kill, yet half glad that he had not so far forgotten his duty, the sheriff pursued doggedly.

He ran more carefully than the fugitive, and although he did not make as much speed, he managed, with the agency of the night's stillness, to keep on the track of his quarry. Sound carries far in the swamps, and he knew that the negro could not escape. Once he heard the ominous rattle which foretells Death, and he leaped nimbly to one

side, jumping instinctively, in the nick of time, slipping and sliding in the ooze, his face bathed in cold perspiration.

Then came the roar of the shotgun; one of the stray buckshot ploughed through his shoulder, and he cursed softly as his own gun dropped, splashing, into the slime. In his left hand he clutched the revolver.

"Too late," he regretted; "the nigger's a goner!"

He heard the wild yell of terror and the subsequent crashing and splashing. He knew that the shells in the gun were exhausted, and he leaped to his feet, dashing toward the spot from whence the sound had come. The steps of another man sounded close by, running frantically in his direction; and he collided sickeningly, head-on, with a wild-eyed, black creature. Long, sinewy arms closed, vice-like, about his body, tentacle fashion, as they went down together.

And as they grappled the sheriff experienced a wild sense of primitive joy in knowing that he at last had in his hands that which he had sought.

Frenzied with the joy of the chase, the father pursued. He, too, ran wildly, and time and time again he was hurled from his feet by an invisible root, and many times he dashed full tilt into the spectral tree trunks.

He heard a wild yell, and then another; and then came the low, bubbling, gurgling cry of the trapped negro. There came to his ears an exultant shriek, demoniacal in its expression of ferocious, bestial triumph; and with it a low-voiced curse in the sheriff's tones. The eyes of the father gleamed.

"God!" he said, "the she'iff's got im!"

He reached them, locked in death embrace, in the water, struggling like madmen amidst slime and mud and water. Above their labored breathing both were

cursing, with the deep-chested, fervent curses of fighting men.

Around them the frogs croaked on, unmindful of the import of the swamp-land drama being enacted before their protruding eyes; the mosquitoes took advantage of the death duel and lighted in swarms on the prostrate figures; far up in one of the squat swamp oaks an owl hooted despairingly, and with shining eyes looked down on the combat.

Hypnotized, the father watched the battle for a few seconds; then from his pocket he slowly drew a long, shiny knife; in his eyes the gleam of the chase had been supplanted by an exultant glare. The moon had risen to the full, and its rays forced their way through the moss-covered tops, lighting the stage with an unnatural, silvery glare.

The father approached, knife in one hand, revolver in the other. The latter he did not dare to use. In the dim light he could discern the terror-stricken face of the negro. The water was foamily turbulent, the green stagnancy intermixed with thin currents of sluggish red and a faint trace of soapy froth.

The negro found the sheriff's knife, and raised it to strike, and at the same

instant the sheriff cried aloud and heaved upward with a last, Herculean effort. For a fleeting instant the negro paused, his hand upraised, gloating over the heaving man held powerless beneath his muscular body. In that moment the sheriff faced Death incarnate!

The one stolen second of triumph was fatal to the negro. There was a leap, a flash, a cry! The body of the victim stiffened; the unnatural expression which seamed his countenance gave way to one of unutterable surprise, and from his foam-flecked lips a dying stream of the vilest invective rolled. There was another flash and yet another, dimly reflected in the pale light, and the negro's body contracted, relaxed, and then splashed lifelessly into the water. His head struck against a root and rested there, while his ghastly, blood-smeared, grinning face, turned upward to the somber canopy of funereal gray moss.

The sheriff rose unsteadily to his feet. He faced the avenger, who had drawn his knife from the body and was calmly wiping it on his torn shirt. He gazed steadily at the sheriff.

"I tol' you I'd git 'im, She'iff," he said simply, "an' I done kep' my word!"



The Joke

BY C. PFAHLER EDGAR

That practical jokes often-times have unexpected and unpleasant endings is proven by this story of a joke played by a crowd of medical students on one of their number.



REMEMBER the six of us were sitting around the grate fire that evening—Walton, the boss engineer, Arnold, the superintendent, Biddle, the section gang boss, and the two Hawley brothers and myself. We were all H. & N. C. men, working near Kai-Fung, the main junction of the new line that the H. & N. C. people were throwing across north China; and, as practically all the laboring work was being done by natives, we six were the only English-speaking fellows on that end of the line.

We had been on this job for about eight weeks before we had reached Kai-Fung, and during this time we had all grown heartily sick of the miserable native beds and other accommodations; so, since we were to be at Kai-Fung three or four months doing the extra rail work that goes with a junction, the boss turned a gang of men, including ourselves, into cleaning and remodeling one of the best of the native huts for our quarters. A week's work had done wonders with the place, and then sending for some real American beds and a lot of other stuff from back home, we had succeeded in making the shack surprisingly comfortable and almost homelike.

But of all the improvements we had made in it, the big rough stone fireplace was our one particular joy. On the cold nights of the long Chinese winter, we'd all gather up close to the blazing, crack-

ling logs. And if we weren't all dead quiet, seeing in the dancing flames pictures of God's own country, where people shake hands when they meet and cheeks are pink instead of yellow—then we'd light up our pipes and tell tales, while the wind outside would rattle the windows and howl around the corners of the house.

There was one evening around that fireplace stands out from all the rest. It was one night in the beginning of winter and a wild storm was sweeping across the bleak country-side. The howling of the wind rose and fell in the blackness outside, and the sleet and snow beat against the window panes in a steady, pattering stream. Inside we had formed our usual half-circle in front of the fire, and the talk jumped from one topic to another until finally it turned to college pranks.

Bob, the younger Hawley brother, told how his crowd at college had once entered the room of an unpopular professor and had placed around the dark room, while the professor lay asleep in bed, a half-dozen tin pails stuffed with old newspapers. And how they had lighted the paper in each of the pails and slipped quietly out into the hall. And then, after hammering on the door and raising an awful uproar to awaken the professor, they had cut for their rooms to await results.

"You should have seen the prof. come out that door," chuckled Bob, wagging his head reminiscently from side to side.

as the delicious memory of it came back. "He thought the whole place was afire, and he tore down the hall in his pajamas, yelling at the top of his voice. He wound up in the street outside, and when they finally made out what he was hollering about and rushed to his room, they found nothing unusual there except the tin pails with a little black ash in the bottom of each.

"The whole thing worked like a charm, and, y' know," he added, "I've been thinking it over, and sometime I'm going to work the same thing on that heathen of a telegraph operator there." Bob referred to the new-school, educated Chinese operator who was mighty unpopular with our crowd.

"Lord!" he exclaimed with relish, "wouldn't I like to work it on him though, just to put some expression in that blank spot he uses for a face!"

After Bob had told his little story, Arnold spoke. Arnold was the superintendent who had just joined us. He was a middle-aged chap, very quiet and reserved. He spoke only when it was necessary, and then rather briefly. Not that he was a pessimist or a chronic grouch, but just a serious, rather solemn fellow who was getting grey around the temples a bit too early in life.

"Bob," he said, in his deep, slow voice, "I'll tell you a fellow ought to be very careful about playing those kind of jokes. Most of the time they turn out all right and nobody is the worse; but once in a while something slips up and then there's a tragedy."

"Oh, I say now," protested Bob, "everything would be all right. The fire would be in tin buckets and it couldn't spread, and besides, we'd be right there watching—nothing could go wrong."

"If you don't mind listening," said Arnold turning to us, "I'll tell you about one that did go wrong." We all assented and he commenced.

"I was a freshman in one of the big colleges back home when it happened. I was a medical student, studying to be a doctor.

"As you probably know, a medical student, after going through a certain amount of other work, is put at dissecting human bodies to gain an accurate and first-hand knowledge of the location and description of the different parts of the body.

"Our morgue, or 'dead room,' as we fellows called the place where these bodies were kept was a large cellar underneath the college hospital building. Down there marble-topped tables were put in rows and on each of these was placed a corpse, usually the unclaimed bodies at the city morgue.

"The bodies were laid on their backs and each was covered with a white rubber sheet. When you know that the room was silent as a tomb and was always artificially chilled, you can easily guess that it wasn't a very pleasant place to stay in.

"Well, three or four times a week, the medical class, with half a dozen professors, would go down in the 'dead room,' and start hacking away at those white, chilly bodies.

"I can tell you, most of us, and especially the first-year men, were always pretty well scared, although of course none ever admitted it. And, as usual, we new fellows came in for a lot of chaffing and jeering from the more seasoned meds—the fourth-year men and post-graduates and the like. While we'd never touch the corpse unless it was absolutely unavoidable, and then gingerly with our finger tips, these other fellows would grab them roughly by the hair and yank them around, rap their heads up and down on the tables and whack them loudly on the side of the face just to shock us first-year men. We used to look upon them as heartless, inhuman

brutes. And of course that made them jibe us all the more.

"There was one fellow in particular who used to rag us unmercifully if we got a little white around the gills, or if our hands trembled when the knife would grate on a bone in the search for some deep-hidden nerve. This fellow's name was Wisner. He was a senior, and consequently an old hand at dissecting. And he never let a chance go by to show up one of us freshies in front of the whole class. Naturally a fellow doesn't like to be made a laughing stock for a hundred students; but, even while we'd resent the kidding, we would always take it in good part and try to laugh it off.

"I remember during one session this senior picked out one of the freshmen, a fellow by the name of Cloud, and made him the butt of his kidding through the entire class-period. And again in the following session he took up his jeering at Cloud to raise a laugh from the rest of the class.

"Whenever the nearest professors were looking the other way, he'd give imitations of Cloud cutting the body. He would look at it in exaggerated fear, approach it cautiously, and touch it with his finger-tip, and then suddenly jump back as though frightened, and all that sort of foolishness, in imitation of Cloud. And it used to make a hit with the class, and the laugh was always on Cloud.

"Now this Cloud was a real young fellow and shy, even for a freshman, so he didn't say a word in reply to Wisner, although he knew it was being carried too far.

"Well, when that session was over, Cloud went up to Wisner and said to him:

"Say, you're such an awfully fearless hero, I'll bet you a ten-dollar bill you can't come down here tonight and

stay in this room one hour—alone.'

"The senior laughed at first, but when Cloud put up his money he borrowed ten and covered it, and the money was given to a sophomore to hold. A dozen or so fellows were standing around and heard the bet made.

"At about seven o'clock that evening there was a small crowd of fellows, mostly freshmen, sitting in the hall at the top of the stairs leading down into the 'dead room.'

"A few minutes later Wisner came along, carrying a magazine under his arm and grinning contemptuously at the freshmen assembled there.

"Where's Cloud, did he get cold feet?" he laughed in his mocking, rasping voice that always seemed to grate on a fellow's nerves the minute he opened his mouth.

"Bateman, the timekeeper and stakeholder, said Cloud had told him that he might not be able to get on hand with the rest, but to go ahead with the bet, that he'd show up before it was over.

"With his hand on the door knob, Wisner laughed at this excuse. He was feeling pretty good at the prospect of such easy money and could afford to laugh.

"Afraid to show up for the killing,' he jeered, and then pulling the door open and slamming it after himself, he clattered down the stairs to the 'dead room.'

"At the bottom, he walked through the gloom to the nearest table and snapped on the light suspended just above it. Dragging a chair up to the table, and pushing the feet of the corpse aside to make room for his magazine, he leaned his chin on his hands and his elbows on the table, and commenced reading to kill time until Bateman should shout down the stairs that the time was up.

"In all the room, only the light directly above Wisner's head was burning, and the corners were filled with shadows.

The marble-topped tables, each with its sheet-covered corpse, stretched up and down the length of the room like rows of tombstones. The room was as still as death, and ghosts and all sorts of weird fancies seemed to lurk in the shadows and behind the tables. And Wisner sat there leaning over his magazine, reading under the glare of the electric light."

Arnold stopped abruptly. He was sitting forward in his chair and staring into the fire. His gaze shifted to the window—and for a long time he looked out at the black storm that was beating against the panes.

Suddenly he startled and glanced around at us as though he had forgotten our presence. Murmuring an apology, he continued:

"After the senior had been sitting there reading for about ten minutes, he heard a slight stirring behind him. Still leaning on his elbows above his magazine, he swung his head around.

"In the farthest corner of the room, where the light was dim, one of the corpses had raised the upper half of its body and remained propped up by its back-stretched arms, while, with its mouth drooping open and wide distended eyes, it stared vacantly at Wisner with a blank, unmeaning stare. That was what the senior saw through the half-darkness—that awful, dull-white naked corpse, with its trunk propped up at an angle and the sheet slipped down to its loins, as it sat there and regarded him silently and curiously.

"After gazing at the thing for a full half minute, the senior started up from his chair, knocking it over, and headed for the stairs. Before he had taken three steps, he threw his arm across his eyes, shrieked once, and pitched forward on his face."

Again Arnold stopped. I was sitting nearest him and I noticed his face. It

was the grey-white color of ashes, and his hand trembled where it lay on the arm of his chair. We were all tense and excited, for the story, added to the mournful howling of the storm and the dying fire, quickened our pulse and made our breath come faster. I confess I threw a glance over my shoulder and edged closer to the fire. Without changing his position a hair, Arnold resumed:

"A couple of doctors were gotten down from the hospital and Wisner was brought up and put in bed.

"It came out later that Cloud had gone down alone into the 'dead room' before any of the others showed up, and had taken one of the bodies from its place on the table and concealed it in a vacant closet at one end of the room. Then, stripping off his clothes and whitening his entire body with flour, he lay on the table in place of the corpse. And with only his feet protruding from under the white rubber sheet, he had awaited the coming of the senior.

"When Wisner came to an hour later in the hospital cot, he was a gibbering lunatic.

"The matter was hushed up to a certain extent and Wisner was sent off to one of the best of the private asylums."

As Arnold paused, young Bob Hawley asked in an awed, scared whisper:

"Couldn't he be cured?"

"No," answered Arnold; "his form of insanity was one of the most incurable kind. He has been at the asylum for nine years and there hasn't been the slightest change, either for better or worse.

"He isn't at all violent and he very seldom speaks; and when he does, it's a meaningless jabber of medical terms, often mixed in with a string of college slang.

"His only irregularity is that he can't bear the sight of a naked or partly naked man.

"Once during his first weeks at the asylum, as he was walking down a hall, he saw through another bedroom door, a man naked to the waist with a sheet covering the lower half of his body, as he lay in bed propped up by pillows, while the doctor worked over him.

"The convulsion that Wisner had right there in the hall nearly killed him.

"Even the sight of a man's arm bared to the shoulder will make him back away and stare at it in horror.

"Wisner had neither family nor money, and Cloud has been keeping him since he went to the asylum. Occasionally Cloud is obliged to go out and see him, and you can imagine the effect it has had on Cloud's life."

Here Arnold stopped. He leaned far forward in his chair and tapped his pipe

on the hearth. His hand shook so the pipe nearly fell. Suddenly he rose and walked to the door leading out into the hall. In the doorway he stopped and faced us, and as I twisted around in my chair I could see his white face twitching as though in pain.

"One should be mighty careful about playing those kind of jokes. Sometimes they do turn out wrong and then somebody lives in hell forever."

He stopped short and looked at the floor as if he dreaded to go on. But he raised his eyes to us and spoke again in a dull, pain-weary voice.

"I know how it feels," he said. "Yes, I know. *I know*. I know because I'm Cloud."

Then I knew why his hand trembled and his face twitched.



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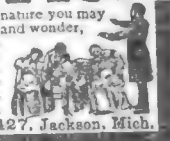
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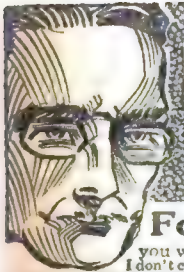


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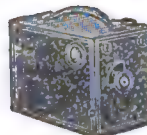


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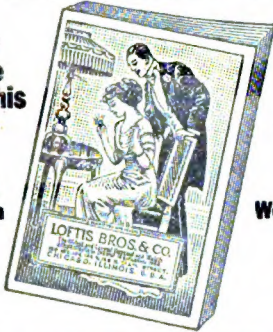
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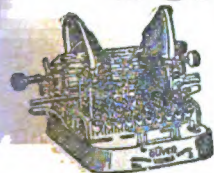
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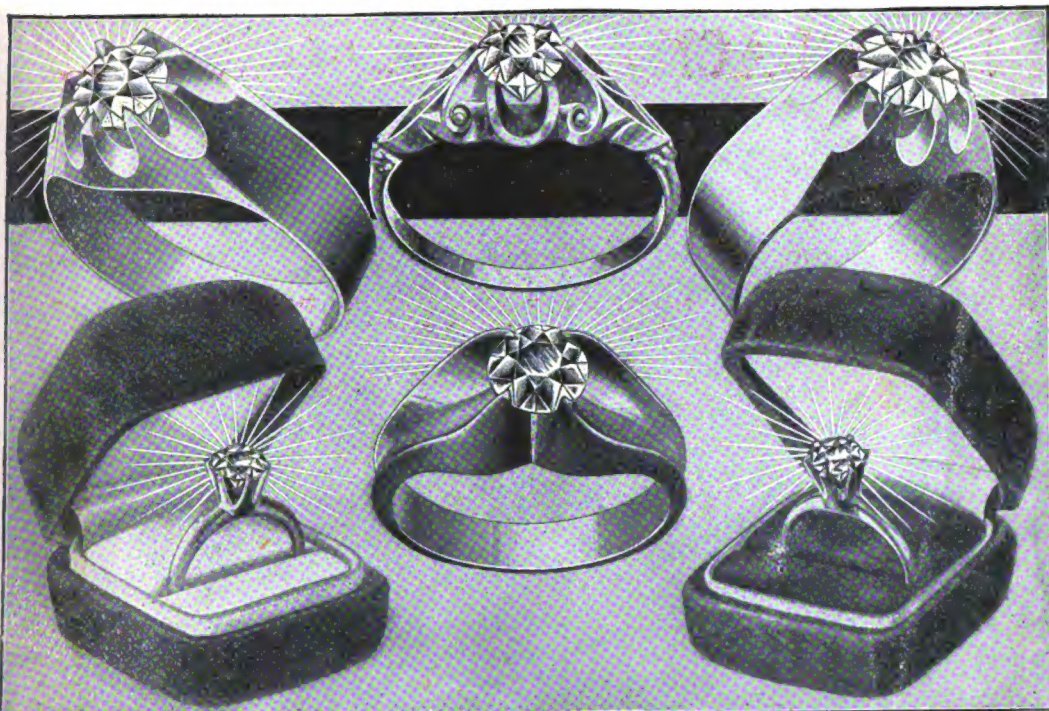
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